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Arts

By

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and

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**NATIONAL METHODIST STUDENT MOVEMENT
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

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Part One:

To Tear Up

To Break Down

Chapter I: **CHRONIC CULTURAL CONFUSION**

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth . . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Romans 1:18-25

Church and world — one or two?

One essential of New Testament Christian faith is that the Church is a community of men gathered out of the world. This community shares the fellowship of the Body of Christ which the world knows not, but being in the world, this fellowship is not an end in itself—its purpose is to pronounce judgment within the world and be an instrument to mediate God's redemption of the world. The New Testament implies that the most significant cleavage in life of which the Christian man can be aware is between his life in the Body of Christ and his life "in the world."

Those who believe are called "the chosen," "the called," "the saints," "the sanctified," or the "called saints."¹ The Christian no longer has his first orientation in the world of calendar time (*chronos*), but in the realm of the fullness of time (*kairos*). Even as the world received not the Lord who called him, the Christian is informed that he will no longer be *persona grata* with that world.² The awareness of this cleavage comes to fullest focus when

¹ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I., trans. by Kendrick Grobel, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 99.

² John 1:9-13; 7:7; 14:17; 17:6-19.

Christians draw together for the corporate experience of worship in the Church.

As they come out of "the world" for this relationship to each other in worship, students must ask themselves the fundamental question, is there any contrast? Does the Church today stand in opposition to the world or does it adapt itself to the world? Does the Christian in worship find himself aware of a tension between himself and the world, tension created by an act of judgment from God and by God's act of saving mercy, or does he adapt himself in comfort to worship, sublimely unaware of any troubling of conscience or gift of mercy? Is the Christian student today motivated in Christ to transform his own life and culture, or does he find the corporate life of the Church simply an extension and continuation of experience at the same level of the cultural experience he left to worship as a Christian?

Human beings love to make sweeping condemnations and broad commendations, neither of which can be done in seeking to answer these questions, for the need is to push the process of questioning deeply and penetratingly into experience rather than to accept an answer too soon. What are the standards by which one can judge the institutional life of the Church, or the student movement to which one belongs? Can it be asked to do the same thing that a fraternity or sorority fellowship does? Can campus social life, a political action group, or membership in a professional fraternity be substituted for the fellowship of the group gathered together by the call of Christ? Can a student belong to a Christian group for the same reasons he belongs to other groups? If a fraternity or sorority demands time and loyalty on his part that prohibits participation in corporate Christian activity, what choice should he make? And vice versa, if his participation in a Christian group is only for social reasons, what attitude should he take if it demands so much time that he gets no knowledge of campus life as a whole?

Who does the judging?

Pushing the question a little further, are the same attitudes of critical judgment carried into worship that are taken in viewing television, attending the movies, listening to a classroom lecturer, or watching the college team lose

its third game in a row? Is worship participated in for compelling reasons as a matter of conscious, willed activity, or simply as continuing a pattern of existence that is natural because inherited, and because it provides outlets for social contacts?

For too many the Christian life in its personal and organized expression grows out of a mild sense of responsibility to God and the Church, conditioned by environment, or produced by a rootless interest in social action which would dissolve into thin air, like the smile of the Cheshire cat, at first contact with the blase agnosticism of the campus irreligious, or the more vital social dynamic of the nonreligious left-wing campus social actionist.

Students are prone to be innocent religiously in the sense that they have never breached their relationship to their cultural environment to see that the imperative of the Christian gospel stands in awful judgment on that situation. Or they have been innocent irreligiously, for they fail to see that in their skeptical irreligion they simply reflect the prevailing campus mood of scoffing at God to establish an immature sophistication.

Peer Gynt said, ". . . when evil days assail, a man needs certain things to trust in, (so) I fitfully absorbed religion; I found that it assimilated much easier if taken that way." And as he sold idols in the spring and shipped out missionaries in the fall ("The plan worked well. For every idol sold out yonder there was a duly baptized coolie, so that one neutralized the other. We kept the missionaries busy, because they had to counteract the idols that we were exporting.")³ so students, like their elders, sell the idols and shibboleths of their culture on the one hand and peddle religion with the other. The same student will worship the cult of the body on Saturday night and the spirit of God on Sunday morning, will sing "I have left all to follow Thee" while he assiduously spends fifty times as much on dressing like a collegiate fashion plate as he places on the church collection plate, will kneel at the altar of popularity while singing with full voice, if not soul, "Destitute, despised, forsaken," will demand the objective "Why" and "Wherefore" in the laboratory and remain

³ *Eleven Plays of Henrik Ibsen*, New York: The Modern Library, pp. 1104-1106.

abysmally ignorant of the theological why's and wherefore's of the Christian faith, will devote years of effort to learning a profession but not one moment of thought to whether or not he can make that profession a Christian vocation, will talk about love and concern for neighbor on the one hand and participate in the cutting callousness of campus gossip or the undemocratic "blackball" on the other, will declare and share the good news of a date with the campus queen or football halfback up and down the dormitory halls with great excitement, but never lift a voice or action to declare the Good News of what God has accomplished for man in Jesus Christ.

Thus, like the Athenians to whom Paul spoke at the Areopagus,⁴ this campus generation worships in turn Dionysus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Ares, Hephestos, etc., and whatever other gods prove expedient, and turns also to an unknown God whose presence is only occasionally felt in moments when a vision of truth or beauty, a passing resolution to high ideals, a flickering zeal for justice, or the spark of compassion illuminates the flow of experience. In the broad purview of experience whirl is king, chaos reigns.

The theology of chaos

It might seem most dubious that such a thing as a theology of chaos can be written. For if chaos is the absence of all order, how then can it be described, or intellectually ordered? This section might be defended on the grounds that it is an attempt to take a backward glance at Sodom with the prayer that in doing so one stands at a safer vantage point than Lot's wife did.

A young man said to me:
I am interested in the problem of reality.
I said: Really!
Then I saw him turn to glance, surreptitiously,
in the big mirror, at his own fascinating shadow.⁵

Another writer has expressed this same sentiment in a little broader fashion. "What the philosophers say about Reality is often as disappointing as a sign you see in a shop window which reads: Pressing Done Here. If you

⁴ Acts 17:22-31.

⁵ D. H. Lawrence, *Stories, Essays, and Poems*. London: Everyman's Library, 1939, p. 349.

brought your clothes to be pressed you would be fooled; for the sign is only for sale."⁶ Our day is plentifully supplied with peddlers of the answers to the riddle of what life is really about. The secrets of successful living, confident living, real living, happy living are available in neatly packaged and predigested form at your nearest bookstore, to be whispered to you by the pseudo religionist, pseudo psychologist, and pseudo scientist if only you can decide which real answer to buy in on. One has the suspicion that the authors of these panaceas which are here today and gone tomorrow have grown enamored of their "own fascinating shadow." The tragedy is that in selling the works of their own minds these writers, and all others who sell men on any answer to life's problems that comes short of the mercy of God, contribute to the chaos of our day. They worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

Chaos is the absence of order and exists in any area of experience when there is no effectual principle to give order. Hence, in political experience when the ordering authority of a state breaks down and each man is a law unto himself chaos exists. When the self-imposed or externally imposed disciplines that give order to personal life break down and are replaced by no other discipline, chaos exists. It is customary to say that a man who acts from principles at variance with ours (e.g., what's his is mine if I can contrive to deprive him of it without his knowledge; or a lie is justified if one is not caught in it) is unprincipled, but this is a mistake. The negation of life according to principle—no matter what the principle might be—is life in which no dominating and ordering principle is apparent, and it is in this sense that modern culture, the campus scene, and individual life itself are chaotic. The willingness to grasp in desperation at every panacea that comes along epitomizes the sense of lostness that pervades our age. The cynicism to be found in the humor magazine and the smart set of our contemporary campus scene is indicative of the fact that many have lost faith even in panaceas. *Time's* now well-known comment on "The Silent Generation" is borne out when one audits

⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Vol. I., trans. by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson. Princeton University Press, 1946, pp. 25, 26.

the brooding silence of answerlessness that returns when the questions "In what direction are you traveling?", "What principles are you living by?" are asked of today's student generation.

Such a chaos is inevitable whenever man overthrows the supreme principle of order and worships the creature and the creature's works rather than the Creator and the Creator's works. Paul graphically describes in Romans 1:28-32 what happens when men ignore what God has revealed "ever since the creation of the world," and the futility of our day, as the futility of Paul's day, is the result.

The biblical background of the Christian faith provides out of the experience of the Jewish nation and of the Christian Church struggling to establish itself in a hostile world a great illustration that to worship anything less than Almighty God is to run into conflict with the only adequate structure of order man can discover, sowing seeds of destruction and chaos as a result. The prophets of the Old Testament view the destruction of individual character and the dissolution of the Hebrew nation as a result of a service to other gods than the Lord God, a disloyalty about which they felt so strongly that they could only picture it by using such metaphors as the framework of unfaithfulness to the marriage bond. Such images as "an adulterous nation," "whoring after false gods" are used to depict the faithlessness of Israel to the covenant of loyalty to the God who had chosen them and whom they had chosen to serve.

The terms of this covenant call for recognition of the sole sovereignty of God, a sovereignty to be acknowledged through obedience to his righteous will.⁷ And so the pages of the Old Testament carry the accounts of those prophets who proclaimed the word of judgment against failure to obey. Nathan spins a web of moral indignation in David's mind against the rich man who would murder his poor neighbor to get the only treasured possession of the neighbor for himself, and when David is sufficiently aroused, he points the finger of moral accusation—"Thou art the man." When Jezebel, Ahab's wife, answering herself the rhetorical question, "Who rules in Israel, anyhow?" has Naboth killed so that Ahab could procure Naboth's vineyard, Elijah, who

⁷ Exodus 20:1-17.

stands squarely for the fullest allegiance to the will of the Lord God, appears on the scene, and before he can even speak in condemnation, his presence so works on Ahab's conscience that Ahab says, "Have you found me out, O my enemy?" At another time Elijah returns after Ahab has had many of the prophets put to death for challenging him (he sought to make his will, not God's, sovereign, to serve his pleasures, and Jezebel's, rather than God's). On seeing Elijah his greeting is, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah's answer is, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals."⁸

Or again there is the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah. Talking to a people who know and treasure the cultivation of the vineyard, Isaiah tells of a man who loved his vineyard and lavished the most painstaking care on it, clearing it of stones, pruning and hoeing it diligently, and looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. Isaiah asks his audience to judge between him and his vineyard, and the audience applauds the justice of his decision to lay the vineyard waste, to command that no rain fall on it, and to allow it to be devoured. And when they have acknowledged the appropriateness of judgment, Isaiah drives home his point.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, a cry!⁹

Isaiah is an excellent enough literary technician to know that he doesn't have to complete the equation in order to make the note of judgment relevant.

Jeremiah follows in this same tradition as he finds the wise man glorying in his wisdom, the mighty man in his might and the rich man in his riches, rather than in the Lord. Interpreting this false worship within the framework of idolatry Jeremiah pictures the inane level of such worship. A man cuts a tree down, hews it with an axe in his

⁸ I Kings 18:17, 18.

⁹ Isaiah 5:7.

own hands in the form of an idol, bedecks it with gold and silver, nails it on an altar so that it can't move, and then worships it. The gods we create with our own hands are convenient for they keep silence when we say, "We have not sinned," or "What have I done?" But neither can these gods do good or evil, and hence who would fear them? Jeremiah, after painting this picture, turns to God and says:

There is none like thee, O Lord;
thou art great, and thy name is great in might.
Who would not fear thee, O king of the nations?
For this is thy due.¹⁰

He continues with a moving passage on the majesty of God who is the Creator, not the created, and in a mood which is so exalted that it finds repetition in the writings of the unknown prophet of Isaiah 40-55, and the Psalmist, and the writer of the book of Job.¹¹

With the majestic power of a Creator God, whose holiness is perfected in righteousness, so evident before us, to worship anything less than Almighty God, to stand on our own accomplishments, to refuse to acknowledge the relevance of his judgment upon us, is to worship the self in pride, to assert the supremacy of our will over his. The worst facet of this prideful assertion of the supremacy of our own wills is seen in the Old Testament prophets as the attempt of man to sanctify his own acts by justifying them in the name of religion, or identifying religion with some kind of reward or benefit that will accrue. The author of the Book of Job in the Old Testament criticizes once and for all a concept of religion which promises earthly success within the very dimensions in which we would like to be successful whether or not there were a God. It is Satan in the Prologue of Job who suggests that men are religious because it pays. "Does Job fear God for nought?" Who wouldn't revere God for the sake of reward? "But put forth thy hand now, and touch everything he has, and he will curse thee to thy face."¹² How much religion is preached now, as in Job's day, which equates religion with utilitarian benefits, peace of mind, confident living, success in business, marriage and friendship? The book of Job is in keeping with the whole prophetic tradition of the Old

¹⁰ Jeremiah 10:6, 7.

¹¹ See Jeremiah 10:11-16; Isaiah 45:8-46:13; Psalms 8, 104, 147; Job 38-42.

¹² Job 1:9-11.

Testament. It asserts that this kind of idolatry, transforming God into a tamed-down, housebroken deity to sanctify what we would do whether or not we believed in God, is religion at its worst. The false prophets who proclaimed "Peace! Peace!" when there was no peace came under bitter attack for apostasy and unfaithfulness to the divine revelation.

The result of failing to acknowledge the Lordship of the Lord God, worshiping instead the creature and the works of his hands, is exile, chaos, destruction of the nation, and toward the end of the Old Testament period, as in Daniel, of the individual. "In the old Israelite view of life, good actions are normal and must produce good results. Sinful actions are abnormal, preying on the positive forces of life. The righteous soul is upright; the sinful soul is crooked. *Sin means dissolution of the soul*, and the soul entirely sinful is no longer reckoned a human soul."¹³

New Testament theology of chaos

In turning to the New Testament and seeking to discover what basis for a theology of chaos exists there, one is struck first by the fact that the topic of idolatry seems no longer relevant. In the teachings of Jesus, and the other writings of the New Testament, the theme of supreme loyalty, whole-souled, wholehearted, whole-minded, to God is as central as in the Old Testament, but idolatry as such is not the mode of identification for the refusal to worship God and give him this supreme loyalty. "The role which the idol plays in the Old Testament is taken in the New Testament by Satan."¹⁴ The mythological picture of demons and their control of men's lives in the New Testament seems to be quite foreign to the analysis of man's rebellion against God in the Old Testament, but underneath this difference of vehicle used by the two Testaments there is the fundamental common denominator of the power of rebellion against God. The New Testament elevates the power of rebellion into a cosmic being whose activity can be seen from the time of

¹³ A *Theological Workbook of the Bible*, ed. by Alan Richardson, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950, p. 257. (Italics by author.)

¹⁴ Paul S. Minear, *Eyes of Faith*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, Copyright, 1946, W. L. Jenkins, p. 68. Used by permission.

the temptation of Jesus to the time of his influence in the lives of men that brings Christ to the dark hour on Golgotha. Though the symbolic means of expression differ, the basic experience is the same.

. . . Analyzed in terms of personal experience, the origins lie in the perspective center of divine-human intercourse. Immediate awareness of Satan's power is basically akin to the prophetic apprehension of the history-long conflict between God and his rebellious sons. From man's side, demonology is but the form for expressing the interior struggle between the evil and the good intention, so central to Jewish anthropology. From God's side, it expresses the perpetual struggle with idols, which finds enduring expression in the Decalogue itself. The radii of the theological ideas diverge, but the center of experience remains the same.¹⁵

Temptation comes in the form of Satan, chaotic personality is demon-possessed, Jesus refutes the charge of being in league with Satan by reference to his healing warfare against Satan's demons. The temptation of Satan accounts for the evil acts of Judas and Ananias, and though defeated he continues to strive for power over us. Passages such as Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; 10:25; 12:24; Luke 22:3; 13:16; 10:18; II Cor. 2:11; Matthew 7:22; 8:31 portray the extent to which satanic power accounts for evil in the world according to the mythology of the New Testament. We lose sight of the significance of these passages if we argue over whether they are literally or mythologically true, for their main purport is to show the all-pervasiveness of the tendencies in human life to draw away from God, to yield to the evil desire rather than the good, to pursue such personified evils as wealth for its own sake (mammon) rather than the will of God.

In the writings of Paul the struggle goes on between flesh and spirit, with service to the law of flesh producing chaotic personality. The vicious forces of immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, are not isolated from each other but proceed from the basic nature of man when he stands outside the bond of love. It is this bond which unites him to God and establishes the dominance of the way of the Spirit in him, and in that union makes him a new man in that his life is no longer chaotic but integrated and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

united with his fellow men. Galatians 5:16-24 is developed further in the letter to the Colossians which established the fact that the works of the flesh stem from inner rebellion (in Col. 3:5-15, compare verse 8 with Mark 7:20-23), and that it is in returning to the service of God, bound to him in love, that everything is pulled back together into perfect harmony. These passages make it clear that Paul's flesh-spirit distinction is not a body-soul dualism, but a more fundamental assertion that the seat of sin (the fleshly) is in man's total nature, body, mind and soul when these turn in upon their own nature, serving self-will rather than the Divine will. The love of God is the bond that restores God's image in us, makes our will again obedient to his, and this love has its prime demonstration in the act of God on Calvary that we might be again reconciled to him. *

Worship of the creature

This analysis of the biblical roots for a "theology" of chaos is borne out in man's continuing experience. When man worships the creature and the creature's works, his worship is self-defeating, and his last cry is the cry of the disillusioned. From *The God that Failed* and *The Witness* to H. G. Wells' *Mind at the End of its Tether*, the modern world exhibits this disillusion.

Communism which seeks to overthrow class distinctions built on economic inequality ends by developing economic inequalities built on the power class distinctions it needs to enforce its own ends. The worship of success, in terms of being liked, ends in Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*. The pursuit of scientific objectivity in the laboratory ends with government control of a science too dangerous to let loose, and the plea of the scientist that someone (not he himself!) supply the moral resources to control what he has created. The optimism of belief in progress to perfection in western culture has ended in a feeling of "... helpless impotence and dismay as it has receded before a rising tide of catastrophic events."¹⁶ The American century has reached mid-tide facing a rising wave of desire on the part of other nations not to be

¹⁶ Charles Ransom speaking at the Sixteenth Student Volunteer Movement Quadrennial Conference, reported in *Christ's Kingdom Is Man's Hope*, Association Press, 1952, p. 38.

dominated by America. The destruction of hopes based on the worship of creaturely principles leaves a student generation which Charles Ransom has described as possessed by a "... mood of disenchantment which has cut so deep that it lacks even the energy of cynicism. It often expresses itself in the opportunism which seeks to seize whatever limited satisfaction life has to offer before the sword of fate falls."¹⁷

Such is the theology of chaos. The worship of the creature and his works might lead to a day, a year, or even a generation of hope and feverish activity but ends in the destruction of the temples of man.

O weariness of men who turn from God
To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action,
To arts and inventions and daring enterprises,
To schemes of human greatness thoroughly discredited,
Binding the earth and the water to your service,
Exploiting the seas and developing the mountains,
Dividing the stars into common and preferred,
Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,
Engaged in working out a rational morality,
Engaged in printing as many books as possible,
Plotting of happiness and throwing away empty bottles,
Turning from your vacancy to fevered enthusiasm
For nation or race or what you call humanity;
Though you forget the way to the Temple,
There is one who remembers the way to your door:
Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.
You shall not deny the stranger.¹⁸

There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled—
Law for man, and law for thing;
The last builds town and fleet,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking.

... Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.¹⁹

The proper meaning of the secular

On the other hand man is a thing, a creature. While contemporary ecclesiastics are so fond of cussing participation in this world as secularism, or more correctly, using

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, from "The Rock," *Collected Poems*, 1909-1935. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936, p. 192.

¹⁹ *The Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York: The Modern Library, 1940, p. 770.

secularism as their favorite swear word, the term is threatened with the loss of any real meaning. An epithet has no meaning; it is as the roar of an explosion or the grunt of a weight-lifter. Its relevance is only emotional.

The secular should have significance, beyond the peevish, for religious understanding. Its traditional meanings have been various, but for the most part have signified the worldly as against the spiritual, the timely as contrasted to the timeless, the things of this present world as opposed to the things religious. These traditional implications of the word are not correct nor felicitous, but they have invested the secular with a certain dignity, even if it was largely negative.

A portion of the contemporary criticism of the secular has narrowed the field, attempting not to succumb to the single-minded temptation of name calling. This criticism has identified the secular with that kind of world view in which religion becomes irrelevant. It is not, continues this thought, that secularism is actively opposed to religion, as the Militant Godless of the Soviets, but that it is indifferent to religion. This may be a basic reason for the present "cuss-word" approach to secularism. One may despise a vigorous opponent even as he admires his strength. But to be ignored is the ultimate sneer.

The religious enthusiasts are, for the most part, self-consciously afraid they are the targets of the sneer. The nonreligious people, however, often would be surprised if directly accused of such a pose. They, typically twentieth-century westerners, are fitted out with the specialized and compartmentalized strategy for living which insists that religion is a specialized field. To a scientist, or a businessman, religion is outside his province. He may not wish to be different, it is just that he feels incompetent to deal with an area outside his specialty.

Typically, if the religious is thought to be completely separate from the other spheres of this world, then the children of this world will make that which is separate inconsequential. As already mentioned, Paul looked upon the "flesh" as sinful not because it is of the world, but because it prided itself upon being the world's meaning. That is, the secular is legitimate, but not definitive. The people of the flesh, however, tend to pursue the human to the exclusion of all other.

✓ The created world, humanity's realm, is not in itself demonic nor evil. It becomes so only when it folds in upon itself. When the self contemplates only the self, when the creation defines itself only in terms of that created and ignores its maker, then it becomes evil. It is this myopic passion of the materialistic contemporary western world which many Christian thinkers have tagged secular.

It is not adequate, however, so to identify this modern aberration with the word "secular." The secular means also the human. It is the created world, humanity's home and humanity itself. Christianity, and the church which sponsors it, are not another realm, but are the human society and its habitat. The Christ of faith is also the Jesus of history. The secular is neither an illusion nor opposed to the spiritual. It is real but cannot confine reality.

Christianity has always been able to invest the things of this world with the gown of its values. Perhaps gown is not the most apt term. Rather, it is that the real life of this world and the values of the Kingdom are in one and the same context.

The paradox, of course, is that having said this, the Christian must also witness that to think of this world, of its inhabitants, as holding in itself or themselves the meaning of life is the mortal sin. It is idolatry. It is the substitution of man for God, of the creation for the Creator.

The important point to realize is that Christians and their church are secular, wholly human. The realm of God is not apart, though it is distinct. The secular is their human dimension. It is not their definition.

The theology of chaos describes this world without God Almighty, his Son, or the eternal activity of the Holy Spirit. A theology of the secular is not a renunciation of the world, but a fulfillment of God's purpose for it. Material things are not in conflict with the life in God, they find their very meaning in him.

Worship is the ordered celebration of God's glory, not outside, but within and through the secular. Art does not renounce the mundane reality of the secular for some abstract kind of beauty; it gives meaning to the secular, and, if it is Christian, in seeking to describe reality it also tries to convert the unbeliever.

This does not mean that the Christian does not live in

tension with many aspects of the world. He must. This does mean that although he must live as an alien, as far as many currents of experience are concerned, he must not fall into the oversimplified dualism of the spiritual and the secular. While he refuses to bow to "this world," paradoxically he must never attempt to escape it.

Chapter II: CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

God would be loved. Therefore he wants Christians. To love God is to be a Christian. Now man's knavish interest consists in creating millions and millions of Christians, the more the better, all men if possible; for thus the whole difficulty of being a Christian vanishes, being a Christian and being a man amounts to the same thing, and we find ourselves right where paganism ended. Christianity mocked God and continues to mock him—just as if to a man who was a lover of nuts, instead of bringing him one nut with a kernel we were to bring him tons and millions—of empty nuts, and then make this show our zeal to comply with his wish.—Kierkegaard.¹

The last chapter suggested that one key issue the Christian becomes aware of is the conflict between the world and the Church. The question was raised whether the Christian in worship found himself aware of a tension between himself and the world, or whether he adapted himself in comfort to worship, unaware of any troubling of conscience.

In returning to this question, and looking at the Church of today, the fundamental question to be asked in regard to the relationship between the Church and the world might be "who has conquered whom?" For the chaos of our world today is most evident in the willingness of the Church to adapt itself to the world of which it is a part, doing nothing more significant than providing the invocation and benediction to a purely secular interlude. The Church has adapted itself to culture, using the methods of the world to carry out its organization, to raise its money, to carry on its evangelistic campaigns, and, most significant, using the standards of the world to measure its success.

Soren Kierkegaard tells the story of the domestic geese. They lived in the comfort of a barnyard, and every Sunday one of their number would preach a sermon to them as they gathered in the corner of their pen on ". . . the glorious destiny of geese, of the noble end for which their maker had created them. . . . They were to use their wings to fly to distant pastures to which

¹ *Attack Upon Christendom*, trans. by Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946, p. 156.

they really belonged; for they were only pilgrims on this earth." The geese nodded and applauded the sentiments of the preaching goose, discussing the sermon in high-sounding language as they waddled home from divine worship. But it never came to anything. One thing they did not do. They didn't fly to the distant pastures to which they really belonged, for the corn on which they were being fattened was good and the barnyard was secure. One thing they did not do. They did not fly. Instead, on Mondays "... they would tell each other what had happened to the goose who had taken the end set before them quite seriously, and in spite of many tribulations had tried to use the wings its creator had bestowed upon it." Because this goose went about meditating on flying he grew thin and wan, obviously not as prosperous as the other geese, so the only conclusion that could be drawn was that he wasn't blessed by God. But the geese that loved the barnyard didn't talk *on Sunday* about their brother with the far-off look in his eyes for if they had done so it "... would have been obvious that to attend divine service would have been to fool both God and themselves." Kierkegaard concludes that this situation is descriptive of what happens in divine worship in Christendom.

Jean-Paul Sartre has endeavored to give philosophical status to the word "stinker." A stinker is one who outwardly and verbally has accepted a system, and then undermined it from within by not living according to it. He thinks the Frenchmen who before the war talked about the "French Way of Life" and sounded like superpatriots, and then during the German occupation turned around to collaborate with the Nazis are prime examples of stinkers. But Christianly speaking, how do those of us who are like empty nuts, or the preaching goose, stand in this respect? Christianly speaking, are we not the ones who are stinkers?

God in Christ sought to reconcile the world unto himself, a reconciliation which implies an awareness of the areas in personal life, social, political, and economic life where the world needs to be reconciled to God's standards. But we have undermined the place of Jesus in Christianity, have flouted God's love for the world by joining together

² *The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard*, ed. and trans. by Alexander Dru. London: Oxford University Press, 1938, pp. 541, 542.

what God in Christ put asunder. We have sought to reconcile God to the world. Worse than that, we have acted in worship as though no reconciliation at all were needed, as though the values of God and the values of our common life were one and the same thing, existing on one and the same plane. We have been so willing to call ourselves and our society Christian that being a human and being a Christian come in the end to the same thing. A magazine survey a few years ago indicated that 80 per cent of the respondents believed the Sermon on the Mount, if practiced, would solve the problems of the world, and a few questions later 80 per cent again indicated they thought they lived according to the Sermon on the Mount.

Church without community

Whether it be the disunity of the church in America, or just the fact that it has become a cultural organization to which one automatically belongs if one travels in a certain class of society, like a lodge, or fraternal order, it is certainly true that in all too many cases there is lacking a sense of the Church as *koinonia*. This New Testament word combines the meanings of sharer, partaker, partner, companion, which lie behind the translation of *koinonia* into the word "fellowship." Such passages as I Corinthians 1:9, Philippians 1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10, and I John 1:3, 6, 7, illustrate the meaning of this fellowship, and the references from I John particularly portray the extent to which this fellowship implies an inextricable connection between the vertical and the horizontal, between man and God on the one hand, and between man and man on the other.

We need to ask ourselves at this point if we find this quality of fellowship in mutual love in the church today? Does it find its highest expression in the act of corporate worship? Indeed, one might well find that there is very little awareness of the fact that true worship is by its very nature a corporate, fellowship experience. The twaddle one hears about worshipping God on the golf course is twaddle precisely because worship must find its central issue in a community experience. Are we aware in our Church life of today that the basic value in coming together on Sunday morning for a Church worship service is not to save the minister the trouble of delivering the

sermon to us individually, nor to get together with our friends, nor simply to sing hymns and read responsively together, but to participate in being bound together in Christ? Perhaps the reason this value is lacking in so much of Protestant worship is that even among the clergy there is no agreement on the central purpose of worship in the life of the Church, or a failure to use effective means to accomplish this purpose so that it becomes a real and vital experience for the congregation.

Unimaginative worship

Here one can turn the major focus of interest to the chaos existing in worship itself, particularly in the free churches which have not remained in close touch with a liturgical tradition and today are trying to incorporate piecemeal elements in their worship which are supposed to lend the air of liturgy to it. It is in the life of worship in a church that confusion about purpose and value should be least present, yet where most confusion prevails. It is here that many college students express their gravest dissatisfaction with the life of the institutional church.

In churches where the remodeling of sanctuaries, or the building of new sanctuaries is going on there is a decided movement in the direction of the split chancel, and away from the old center pulpit, auditorium design worship center. The minister is taken out of the central spot and the symbols of God's redemptive acts are placed there as the primary focus of the life of worship in the Church. The altar becomes the vehicle to portray the meaning of the constant act of sacrifice which ought to be the center of meaning for the worship service. What happens? After remodeling the sanctuary an additional sum of money is spent to provide spotlights to focus attention on the minister and leave the altar and the symbols of redemptive action in the dark. It is as though the minister were intent on making the congregation wrestle with him instead of God.

The poverty of the Church today can be seen in the lack of imaginative use of resources in worship. The full liturgical tradition provides variation through the Christian year in the services of the Church, but how often a fixed order of worship is adopted and never altered through the

whole year. Even in student groups where the fullest imaginative use of all the best resources in art, music and literature could bring out the dramatic qualities implicit in the act of worship, the full drama of salvation and our participation in it, one finds a poverty of resources. How many student Christian movement worship services exhaust the concept of worship materials when they have a darkened room, two candlesticks, a cross, Sallman's "Head of Christ," an open Bible and a voice from the back of the room? How many more services do not even reach the level of effectively using these resources, and get along with a few "hymns" containing an infantile level of Christian thought, tunes of tawdry emotionalism, a quickly chosen Scripture passage, and an impromptu prayer that reveals a startling lack of firsthand acquaintance with deity? Add to this the fact that in the college and university scene all too often there is a complete lack of appreciation when something really creative is done and one becomes aware of the appalling extent of our spiritual poverty today. Within the framework of the admonition to love God with the whole soul, whole heart, whole mind, whole body, one wonders if much of contemporary worship calls for the participant to be involved wholly in any of these areas. Referring back to our word *koinonia*, there is a direct relationship between the depth and thoroughness of participation and the extent to which Christian fellowship is established. That there should be such an indifference to the use of the fullest talents possible in an act of Christian worship is the biggest single indictment against the quality and depth of the Christian experience of today's Christian students.

Religiosity of the commonplace

If attention is turned to the role of the sermon, or to the main subject matter presentation in a worship service, one again finds chaos present. In Methodism, as the leading Protestant denomination in terms of numbers, one finds that the great bulk of preaching is not doctrinal, nor biblical, nor capable of producing a significant sense of encounter with the God of kingdom, power and glory. The autobiographical anecdote, the homely story, the peace of mind approach, do-goodism shorn of the moti-

vating contact with a God whose righteousness is known in the personal experience of judgment, the life-centered sermon which gets no further than centering on life as it might be lived with a little extra charge of religiosity, issue forth from the pulpit today. If one turns to the kind of resources used by many college and university religious groups to provide content for a devotional talk or worship service one finds the same situation reflected. Quotations from the writings of Kahlil Gibran with their vague air of mysticism and spirituality, the extraneous bit hastily culled from some kind of anthology, or the "canned" worship service, the use of some novel device just for the sake of the novelty of the technique, not out of a knowledge of its contributory role in accomplishing what should be accomplished in worship are close to typical. The students on the campus today who have left the church not out of rebellion against it, but dissatisfaction with it, might echo the words of Emerson:

I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his church. Do I not know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution he will do no such thing? Do I not know that he is pledged to himself not to look but at one side, the permitted side, not as a man, but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney, and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectation. . . . We come to wear one cut of face and figure, and acquire by degrees the gentlest assinine expression.³

If this age is blind to the ideals of God, it needs men consumed with a vision from God to restore its sight; if this age is dumb and unable to speak words of healing to itself, it needs men in whom a zeal for the House of the Lord has loosened tongues that can communicate the Truth of God; if our age is deaf to the values of the spirit, it needs a Church not made with hands but by the Holy Spirit, and a life of worship in which worship becomes the offering of life to God in order to restore the ability to hear the Word of Life.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 150, 151.

Chapter III: CHAOS IN THE ARTS

... they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Rom. 1:21.

... we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. Acts 17:29.

No definition of art exists to which the majority of contemporary artists would agree. There is little community of expression in the plastic arts, in poetry or novel, song or dance, even in architecture. There exist warring camps, with uneasy truces sometimes observed.

Futile in their thinking

The Janus faces, the many faces, and the faceless faces of contemporary arts characterize the melee. Where there are no clear faces, no authoritative models and few texts, there is slight recourse but to pin the label of chaos on the results. A vision of the primary realities is blurred by the trickster who paints face upon face so he can be a little ahead of the crowd and the dummy who makes sounds but no melody.

The pity of the situation is startling when one notes that it is the commercial artist as advertizer who comes to the bar of judgment claiming to carry the standard of reality. At least he claims to picture real things. They can be touched, felt, and known for they are of shapes and patterns of experience. That they are substitute forms and illusory experiences he does not admit, although the evidence would testify with Carl Sandburg:

Another baby in Cleveland, Ohio,
in Cuyahoga County, Ohio—
why did she ask:

"Papa,
what is the moon
supposed to advertise?"¹

"Commercial" art

The paragon of twentieth-century America, i.e., practical

¹ Carl Sandburg, *The People, Yes*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936, p. 8.

man, will forego "art as such" unless he can find a way to make it practical also. This has been done with commercial art.

The artist today, who wants to make a success of himself according to the gods success worships, turns to the service of commerce and industry. His art serves an industrial purpose. He becomes an assistant in the world of selling. Fritz Eichenberg insists:

Pretenses are gone, niceties dispensed with. The term "commercial art" is born. Art has become unashamedly venal. It sells anything from health to horror, from food to fashion, from pleasure to poison.

Now the commercial artist can become a prince himself. He can acquire a fortune, social prominence, national importance. But in order to get it, one little thing is required of him—he has to sell himself, too, body and soul.²

This prostitution of art is probably no more vile than that of a similar use of the vocation of scientist in the interests of finding some kind of synthetic ingredient that will make more lively the sales of toothpaste or hair oil, nor of the educator who, signing his name with a Ph.D., "proves" with appropriate academic jargon to back him up, that TVA is socialism because a utilities propaganda sheet will pay him handsomely for the product.

The commercial artist is a "success" because he has succeeded in leaving the faith of the true God for that of the cultural idols. He, unwilling to be irregular, and therefore to starve (so let us not stand too harshly in judgment), has identified himself with the civilization his culture has created. His art (worship) is that of the creature's dimensions.

The practical man, however, cannot get away with relegating either religion or art to a compartment where it will be seated off from his concerns. He therefore attempts a palliative: worshiping idols (his familiar cultural gods) and adorning his establishment with an art which is either the counterfeit art copied from a past era (not counterfeit to the age that created it, but spurious in the current usage) or debasing his art by looking into a mirror and rejoicing about what he sees.

² Fritz Eichenberg, *Art and Faith*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet, No. 68, December, 1952, pp. 13-14.

Mournful presentiment

One of the roles, which the artist often plays, is that which seeks not only to interpret the spirit of the times but to suggest things to come. With presentiment Edgar Allen Poe resigned from life:

... Yes! tho' that long dream were of hopeless sorrow
'T were better than the cold reality
Of waking life. . . .

And a long line of decadent poets and novelists from Baudelaire and Laforgue to Ezra Pound and the Dadaists would find their companions in the arts among such as Duchamps and Arp. They could all sing with Laforgue:

... Sing and Dance for Life is short
And all is vain—while there on high the moon dreams
As cold as in the time when man was not . . .
... And I, how many days have I to live?

There was always, as Oscar Cargill says, "... the seductive suggestion of the superior value of the neurotic experience."³

The epitome of senselessness and confusion came with the Dada premiere in Paris when a character read a newspaper article while an electric bell kept ringing so that no one could hear what was said, and another drew on a blackboard in chalk and then erased his drawing: the picture being valid only for a moment. "The day the word 'Dada' was invented," affirmed Andre Gide, "there was nothing more to do. Everything written since has come too late. These two syllables reached the goal of sonorous inanity, of a meaningless absolute."⁴

The difference between artists and such orders as politicians is that the artists were the prophets of the Hitlers, Mussolinis and Stalins. They defined the nihilism the "statesman" were, a generation or two later, to order: annihilation of an idea of God, or even values, other than the negative values of nothing; the destruction of all rights in property, marriage, morality and justice and thereby the ripping of that which civilizes man; and a substitution of the individual's own whims for law.

³ Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America*, The Macmillan Company, 1941, p. 214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

One century ago Turgenev's nihilist made his appearance, to give coinage to the spirit of unbelief and destruction and during World War I James Joyce's *Ulysses* wandered through the maudlin reminiscences of a Dublin life so enmeshed in lost passageways of thought that it took a "key" to unravel the scheme and even the key might have been a joke.

Apart from the self-conscious decadents, the most serious aspect of the contemporary artistic confusion comes from a futility that pervades its thinking and its despair of there being any intelligibility about its efforts. The real tragedy of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* was that it was not tragedy at all. If it had been tragedy, Clyde Griffiths would have been working for or toward something. There would have been some meaning to his struggle. That which destroyed him would have been a defect in his character which vitiated his dreams of a fate against which he struggled, although to be overcome. But Clyde had no character, and his fate could not help to cleanse anyone. His failure had no meaning because all that he did was meaningless. The naturalism of the novel makes a travesty of tragedy. For results, no catharsis—only a bad taste.

An age dominated by the naturalistic temperament results in cultural chaos. Naturalism denies the validity of values. It equates standards with superstitions. It sees no meaning in nature, only fate. It apotheocizes the accidental and if it does not exult in the irresponsible, it at least clears the ground for its promotion.

Cult of the brutal

One avenue of that irresponsibility is the tendency toward bestiality and savagery. Seeking the natural man it locates the beast. Believing there is no purpose nor aim to life other than the blind desperation of fundamental need for food, shelter and sex, life becomes a struggle between the species and only the fightingest survive.

Hemingway has been hypnotized by blood, guts, and death. The spectacle of the bull fight became a delight, the "Snobs" showed dreams to be futile and all the old man could possess himself of was his own valor and the skeleton of a giant fish, shredded clean of its meat by the cannibal fish. Farrell's Studs Lonigan plodded a nightmare

trail of disintegration and decay, the judgment day not meaning that there could ever be any justice passed, for Stud's destruction was not something he could help, there was never any hope. *The Man with the Golden Arm* gambled in the jungle called Chicago. When John O'Hara titled a novel *A Rage to Live*, the rage turned out to be a futile play with sex, not for living but for sterile amusement. The dubious distinction of claiming the largest first printing of all time for a novel went to a Mickey Spillane tale titled *The Big Kill* with a sadistic bum for hero. Naturalism cannot admit of the glorious end of things which is the eschatology of the Christian even if Spillane is a Jehovah's Witness. It confuses sadism with force. It cannot even admit of tragedy, for pathos and despair are its sentiments, not thwarted possibilities.

Although blood and death have been many artists' attachment, cults of self-realization have appeared. Paul Gauguin, deserting wife, family and position for the sensual paradise of which he dreamed, trying to live with a Maori princess in barbaric isolation, insisted, "I am no longer aware of days and hours, of good and evil." Asking in a great symbolic picture, "Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?", he limped off into the jungle; taking an overdose of arsenic, he could not even enjoy the fate of dying, living miserably on. He painted pictures not only of permanent interest but enduring inspiration, not because he did not know right from wrong, but because of the turmoil in his own soul where right and wrong fought bitterly. He had a heavy bank of values upon which to draw. When he painted his own portrait near the end, picturing himself without his former arrogant assurance, he titled the lines showing his suffering, "Near Golgotha."

Dead patterns

The art of the dance needed a creative figure to break its nearly dead patterns. Isadora Duncan set the imagination burning in the dance, which is the mother of the arts. The dance, coming from the earliest time, which is as "an ordered expression in motion of the exhilaration of the soul, develops and broadens into the search for God, into a conscious effort to become a part of those powers beyond

the might of men which control our destinies. The dance becomes a sacrificial rite, a charm, a prayer, and a prophetic vision."⁵

Isadora Duncan set out to free the dance and in a measure succeeded. She, however, got swept into the currents of an uninhibited madness, an exaltation of the great god Pan himself, whom she consciously worshiped. But nature free and nature natural is not nature without laws, and the scarf of Isadora Duncan caught in the wheels of an automobile she was driving. She was thrown to the street, dragged and killed.

Even the ballet, which has in recent years exhibited such a vigorous return to favor, seems tormented with dread and fear in the motifs of the dance. The ballet has always had its Petrouchka, the puppet victim of a heartless dancing doll, and the bewitched queen of "Swan Lake" who lured the young prince to his destruction. But this is quite different from such a currently typical ballet as "The Cage" in which a world of female insects exist only to destroy the males. The band of bugs teaches a novice just how to lure the males into the web so they can be crushed. They exult in their destructiveness and the novice learns the horrible fascination of murder.

The very act of destruction of values characterizing much of the artistic activity of the first half of this century gave a vigor to the arts that resulted in much fascinating and excellent production. The pity of it is that the tremendous surge of the movement which resulted in a deluge of creative activity in almost all of the arts had to come to such a futile and whimpering end. Tennessee Williams' plays such as "The Street Car Named Desire" and "A Rose for Emily" are not incidents in the existence of bewildered or disillusioned persons, their central characters are persons without souls, utterly lost, chaos in small packages.

Blanche, in "Street Car" was one whose existence could be accepted only by herself. Out of loneliness she gives in to what she calls "brutal desire," and, sinning, makes her hopes the more hopeless and the only resort is fantasy—she goes crazy.

Truman Capote's novels have the evil smell of decay

⁵ Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance*, W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1937.

that poisons instead of working regeneratively. Some decay is but a process in the life and death pattern of existence, it not only is to be expected, but is itself food for new life. But not this sour kind of decay that Capote writes about which poisons as it dies. It is familiar in Popeye of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*—the chillingly dread creature who is utterly without ordering principle.

When Dix drew the ten sketches showing man's life and fate, the end of the series had to be one of the most distressing pictures ever painted. Even the physical refuge of creativity lay torn and destroyed—the end of life. The paintings of Albright are corpses bloated with decay. It was inevitable that when the movies got around to putting on their celluloid records Oscar Wilde's "Picture of Dorian Gray" he should have been procured by the producer to draw in vivid detail the horrible degeneration of Dorian Gray. In an otherwise mediocre picture that awesome scene will be remembered in the bad dreams of its spectators. Ten years were spent in painting his powerful fear, horror, and fascination with death in the funeral wreath hanging on a rotting door, "That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do."

Losing meaning, only form remains

The role of the artist, whatever his immediate intent, is to interpret what he knows about reality. He is expected to pry a little more deeply, to sight the fundamental, to feel more sharply and poignantly the agony and distress of humanity, and also its glory and vision of hope.

Therefore it has not only been the fact, but also desirable, that the artist should sense the direction in which our world would go and tell us about it in his works. The artist had to illustrate his fears not just logically, but as an artist, in forms which were themselves indicative of the coming chaos. Feeling that the world of the twentieth century would not have the ordered logic that pervaded the eighteenth century nor even the sweeping romantic dreams of the nineteenth, he illustrated grating, jarring notes of machines and men in conflict. With old harmonies obviously out of place and certainly to fall, the artist had no recourse but to speak in sounds and forms which would themselves interpret the sad reality he felt. Knowing that

the parvenue civilization must be split apart, he wailed the mournful song of prophecy.

Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" carries through the piece the mournful moonstruck human cry set against a cacophony of dissonance and mutilated harmony. Paul Hindemith, Stravinsky and others rearranged tones and harmonies so that they grated against the ears in often harsh and jolting ways. Audiences listening to the works were infuriated with what they heard. They were, however, expecting a kind of order and harmony the composer no longer felt.

The poet, with the prescience expected of him, abandoned the classic formulas for a kind of verse which in its patterns expressed what he wanted to say. It was no more possible for him to speak in the heroic meter of the eighteenth century, or even in the vivid pulse of romanticism, than it was not to speak at all. So he warned of what was coming, and those that did not understand what he was saying got angry.

... nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,
And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.⁶

There may be some kind of a parable in the fact that when the newest and most nearly definitive work to discuss American literature was printed,⁷ volume three, the bibliography, gives more space to the commentaries and criticisms of T. S. Eliot than any other writer. Apparently the deliberate abstruseness of his thought and the esoteric references as well as the depth of his thought have provided a field day for the literary critics. The point of the parable may be to ask why so many volumes of commentaries are necessary to interpret to a reading public the quite slender output of this writer.

Indicative of the literary chaos of this time has been the odyssey of Eliot's "The Waste Land." When published, it was taken as a theme song by those who renounced life

⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," *Collected Poems*, 1909-1935, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936, p. 66.

⁷ Spiller, Thorp, et. al., *Literary History of the United States*, Macmillan, 1948, 3 vols.

and tradition. This, they said, is the great poetic work of our generation—for this is what our world is—wasteland, and the sooner man is done with it, the better. Even if they could not quite make sense out of “the Fire Sermon”:

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd.
Tereu⁸

they could go on to the famous cadences that ended “The Hollow Men”:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.⁹

But, in the fullness of literary time “The Waste Land” came not to be the delight of the decadents and nihilists, but the affirmation of the men of religious faith. The evidence is on the side of the revisionists and rather than a comfort to the nihilists, the poem may be a poke at the unbelievers. Since the writing of “The Waste Land” Eliot has become more obviously pro-religious in dogmatic colors, and while some critics have insisted this has resulted in a diminution of his power, others have labeled the relatively recent “Four Quartets” as “the only major poem the twentieth century has produced.”¹⁰ In any case, however, Eliot has helped sponsor the chaos in the arts, with other superior minds quarreling as to whether Eliot is for or against their certain coteries and the people generally have been alienated from his poetry by the obscure symbolism and inverted meaning of his work.

A generation ago, it seemed as if the painters were overthrowing every last canon of what good art should be. A commonplace art critic in the early part of this century claimed, “The picture which looks most like nature to the uninitiated will probably show the most attention to the rules of the artist.”¹¹ Such claims made the artists furious.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁰ *Time*, Dec. 22, 1952.

¹¹ H. R. Poore, *Pictorial Composition and the Critical Judgment of Pictures*, The Baker and Taylor Co., 1903.

They sensed both the static futility of the academicians and the phoney popular choices of the people who wanted their pictures to "look like something," but not really like it at all, a pleasant dressing of the object, fundamentally sterile. The artists insisted such works were not interpretations of reality at all, merely "representation by the art and imagination of man." In fact, when such artists as Glackens, Luks, and Sloan made realistic portrayals of everyday life they became known as "The Ashcan School." In France the little group of innovators sparked by Matisse, Derain and Vlaminck were labeled the "Fauves" (Wild Beasts), and when the progressive art spirits assembled the "Armory Show" in New York in 1913, showing many of the most advanced works of the European continent, not only derision but anger met its appearance. When the show went to Chicago, the police were called out to disperse college students setting out to burn a stuffed effigy of Matisse called "Henry Hair-Mattress."

The spirit of rebellion and the effort that went into the creation of new forms was a thrilling experience to the artistically sensitive, in the first third of the present century. Combined with its prophetic warning it was a hopeful era. But not only did it warn, it was also symptomatic of the fundamental difficulty. The artist felt that something was seriously wrong, but often was himself destroyed by the disease. Warning of the chaos of nihilism and its absence of values, of the discordant primitiveness and savagery of a machine age without moral controls, he himself sought the primitive, reveled in the unabashed unleashing of personal controls, claimed that man was nothing but the plaything of material forces beyond his knowledge or control. He found himself allied with almost innumerable isms, most of which were but artistic elaborations of various naturalistic psychologies or philosophies. Sounding a cry of warning, he became himself the example of the fate ahead.

Without values

The failure of criteria of values interpreting man and his relations to the overworld resulted in the substitute values of form. Good and bad in the arts had nothing to do with righteousness or one's relationships with or denial of God.

Good and bad were judgments of style. Good implied stylistic excellence alone. Bad denoted only improper use of materials, movements or words. Aesthetic values, compartmentalized, lost reference except to criteria devised by the artist. Paradoxically, losing a sense of reality, the emphasis upon form resulted in formlessness.

Thereby is part of the story of the cult of obscurity. Recognizing no allegiance but that of stylistic excellence, style itself became debased. Good became a stereotype because its frame of reference was man and his works. The artist never felt any sense of judgment upon himself and his works because he was himself the judge.

It is true that the arts, all of them, are dependent upon forms of one kind or another. The painter must master the shapes such as circles, triangles, etc., by which he visualizes space. The musician must understand and utilize the mathematical schemes of harmony. The architect must not only be able to visualize space, but as an engineer, relate his shapes to strains and stresses. The danger is, however, that artist, critic, and viewer come to think that the styles and forms are themselves the art. It has even been supposed that by following mathematical formulas, musical masterpieces could be created, slide rule symphonies, as it were.

The specialization of the artist, his isolation from normal channels of life, and association with the humdrum, have been fostered by this practice. The notion has developed that to appreciate art one must know about it. Therefore, the complaint of "I can't understand it" on the part of a layman viewing a new work was not only accepted but applauded. In fact, when the layman admitted such the artist felt he had come a long way forward—because the artist himself was not concerned with understanding, but with style.

In reaction, the amateur was willing that the artist and his creations sit in his own museums. He would satisfy himself with an art he felt he could "understand." It would be something that carried over from childhood: music with a juvenile rhythm, poetry à la Edgar Guest, and pictures that "look like something." That is, representational art with a nostalgic note from childhood experiences prettified so none could be offended.

The Church and the artist

The chaos so typical of our arts has a disarming sense of order in ecclesiastical circles. This serenity is more obvious than real.

The Church has traditional patterns which carry it on for a long time after the needs which stimulated their development have ceased. It is one of the most conservative of institutions, resisting change, often "in the name of God."

The Church in its Catholic branches has gone so far as to venerate certain art objects by means of a code assigned to liturgical art. Liturgical art is more specific than religious art. The function of liturgical art is to assist in the meeting with God. The objects of liturgical art have therefore come to have an aura of sanctity about them. In themselves they possess something of the holy. They are objects of veneration. They aim not only to stimulate worship; they become themselves objects of worship, a fate which has often been repulsive to Protestantism and certainly flirts with superstition.

Nevertheless, liturgical art, so closely entwined with the worship of the Church, has dictated certain forms which the artist must observe. Religious art in general may pay much less attention to certain symbolic or representational forms. The artist seeks to glorify God and his vision may take forms hidden from all other persons. The artist who works with liturgical limits must abide by the needs of the community of the church and he has to stick to forms that are the familiar patterns of religious symbolism and representation.

The liturgical arts have therefore tended to resist change because of the sense of the holy identified with their presence. They are ikons. They are not God, but they are objects of veneration. It, therefore, would be sacrilege to meddle with them. Ancient recipes live on. The cross must be a cross, the piscis recognizable as a fish, the church have a spire and the chancel be altar-centered.

Peculiar, because of its iconoclastic protestations, Protestants in the evangelical heritage have given almost as slavish imitation to certain pieces of religious art and without even the apologetic of liturgical requirements.

Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" has been poorly

copied more often only than Hoffman's "Christ in Gethsemane." Holman Hunt with all his empty and juvenile sentimentality has been apotheosized in the nurseries so that they might know how simple it is to stand at the door and knock. When a building committee has sought for plans for a new house of worship, if they were really daring they would go to a modernized (and counterfeit) kind of Gothic if the parishioners had well-padded pocket-books. Otherwise they would settle for a tidy bit of Georgian, or if really poor, build a barn and put a steeple on it. The Gothic, the Georgian and the barn have persisted (in reverse order of popularity) among the church architects and as favorites of building committees. One feels that Protestants only broke Roman ikons to put up shabbier ones in their places.

The ecclesiastical arts have preserved a semblance of order often by living as parasites. They have been content to let yesterday's inspiration make a contemporary offering. This should not delude the critic. If there is not even the willingness to experiment that the other arts' sponsors have, there is left only an even greater blank space—the nothingness that preceded the Word.

Summary

Chaos in the arts, which has been so summarily suggested, is the witness to a theology of chaos. Man is being used by faith, but a substitute faith has him in its grip.

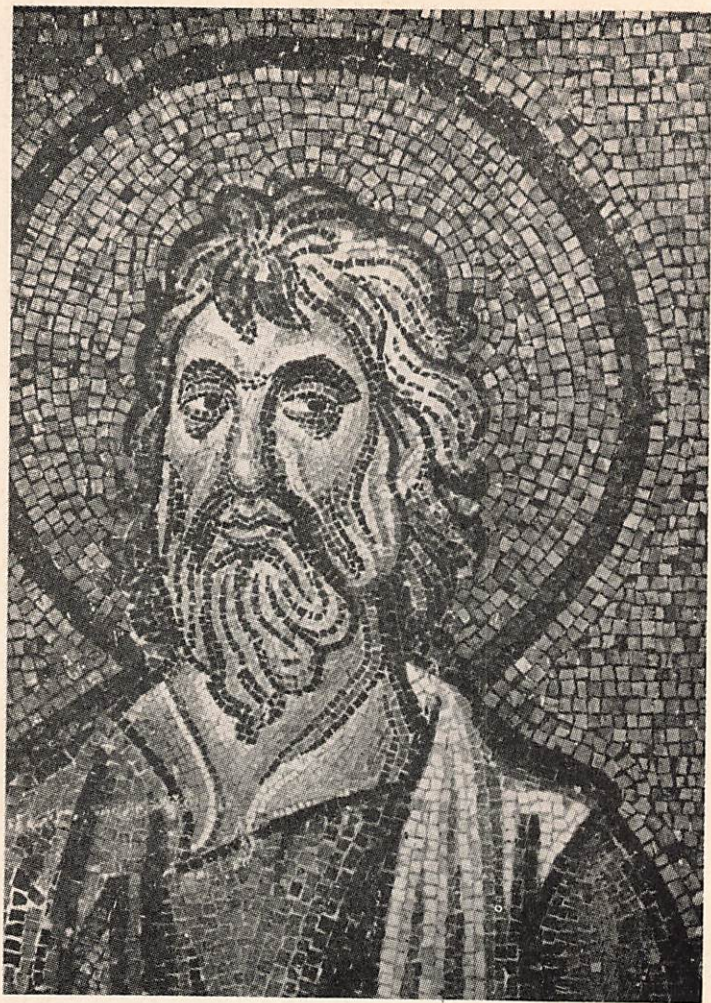
This faith may be in the guise of naturalism—man is a creature of drives and circumstances beyond his control. It may be even a faith in illusions and all that happens is but event without reality, occurrence without direction.

Or it may be the most deceptive faith of all, because seemingly so noble—faith in man himself as the measure and end of being. Measuring himself he turns upon himself and the end result is chaos, for having no criteria to guide himself but those he has himself formulated, he has no loyalties above his whims and opinions.

Man cannot sustain a faith in man alone. Man is too full of the devil to exalt as a God. It did not take man long to perceive this, and with other gods departed, he gave his faith to nothing—that is, to chaos. He turned upon himself and ended up the nihilist.



The Gothic-arched cross on the left side-altar of the Kottayam Valiyapalli Church in Travancore, India. The age is not clear, but such crosses are the most ancient material vestige of Christianity in South India.



"The Prophet Jeremiah," mosaic
from the Byzantine era, done
about 1080



"Christ Teaching," thirteenth century sculpture from Chartres Cathedral

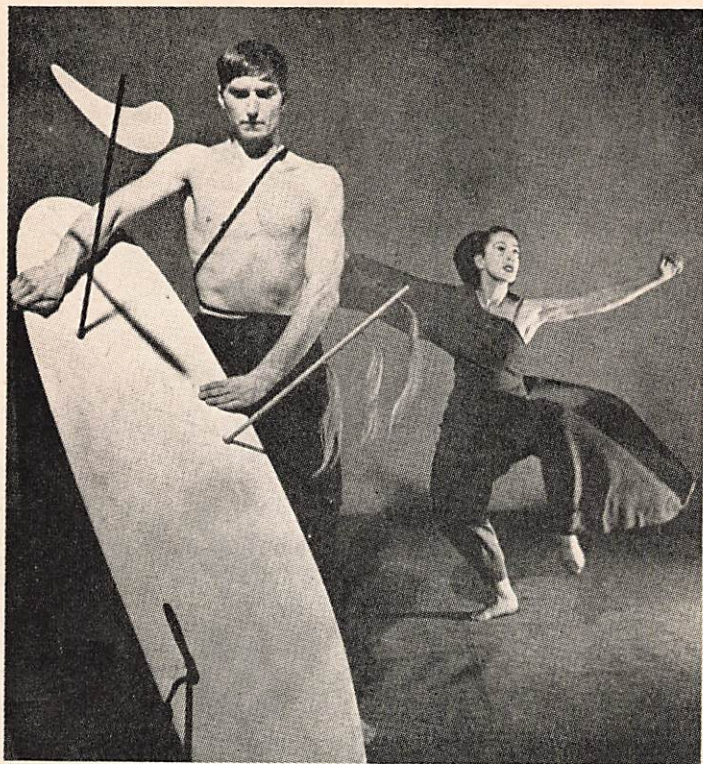


"And Job said, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' And the just, upright man was laughed to scorn." From ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF JOB by William Blake

"Remorses haunt the Prodigal Son."
Scene from a rythmic choir interpreta-
tion directed by Margaret Fisk.

Dave Pierce Studio





Philippe Halsman in Dance Magazine

Martha Graham, in "Dark Meadow," captures the adventure of living through a compact and stirring series of abstractions further objectified by scene designer Isamu Noguchi. Erick Hawkins is also shown.

"Departure," by Max Beckman

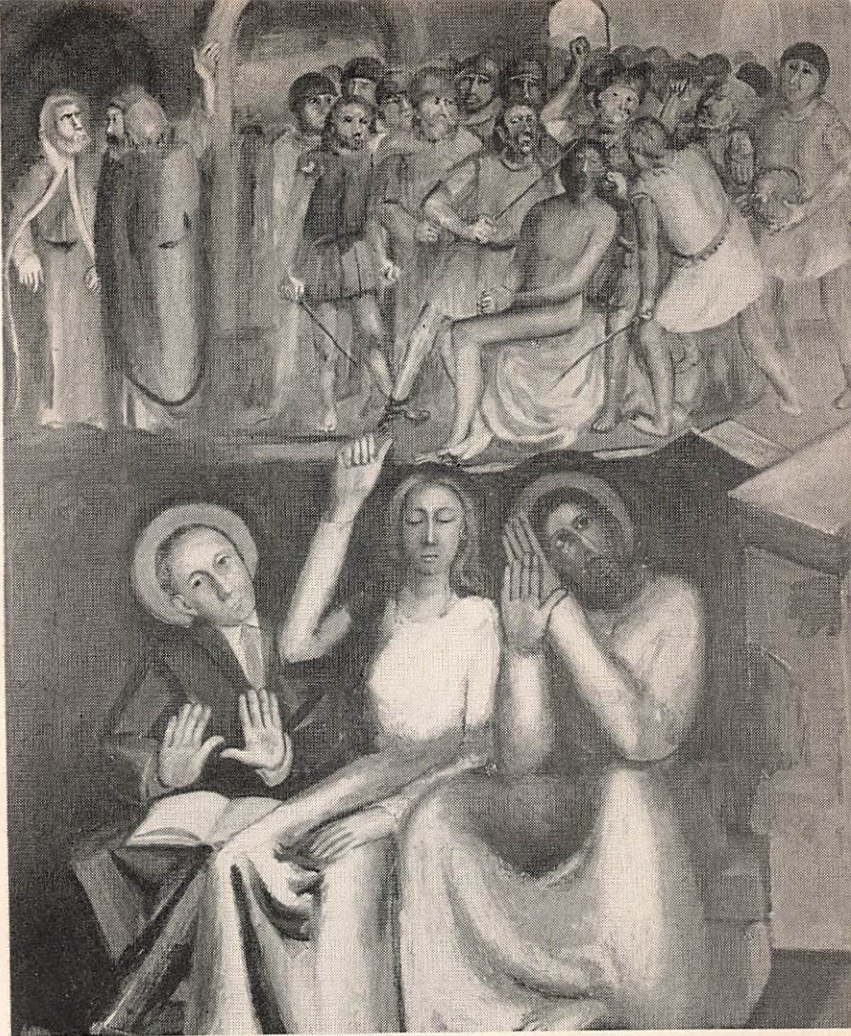
Collection, Museum of Modern Art



"Christ Mocked by Soldiers," by Georges Rouault

Collection, Museum of Modern Art





Midtown Galleries

"The Denial," by Fred Nagler



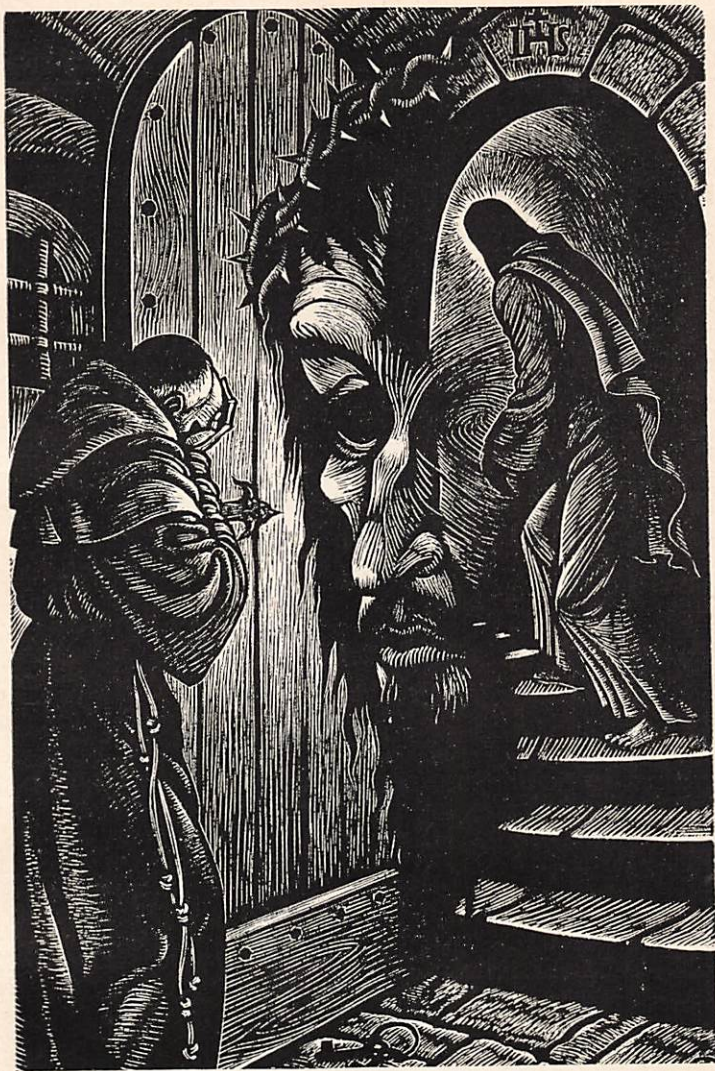
"The Supper," by Robert Hodgell



"Mother and Child," by Henry Moore. Done in Hornton stone, it is in the Church of St. Matthew, Northampton, England.

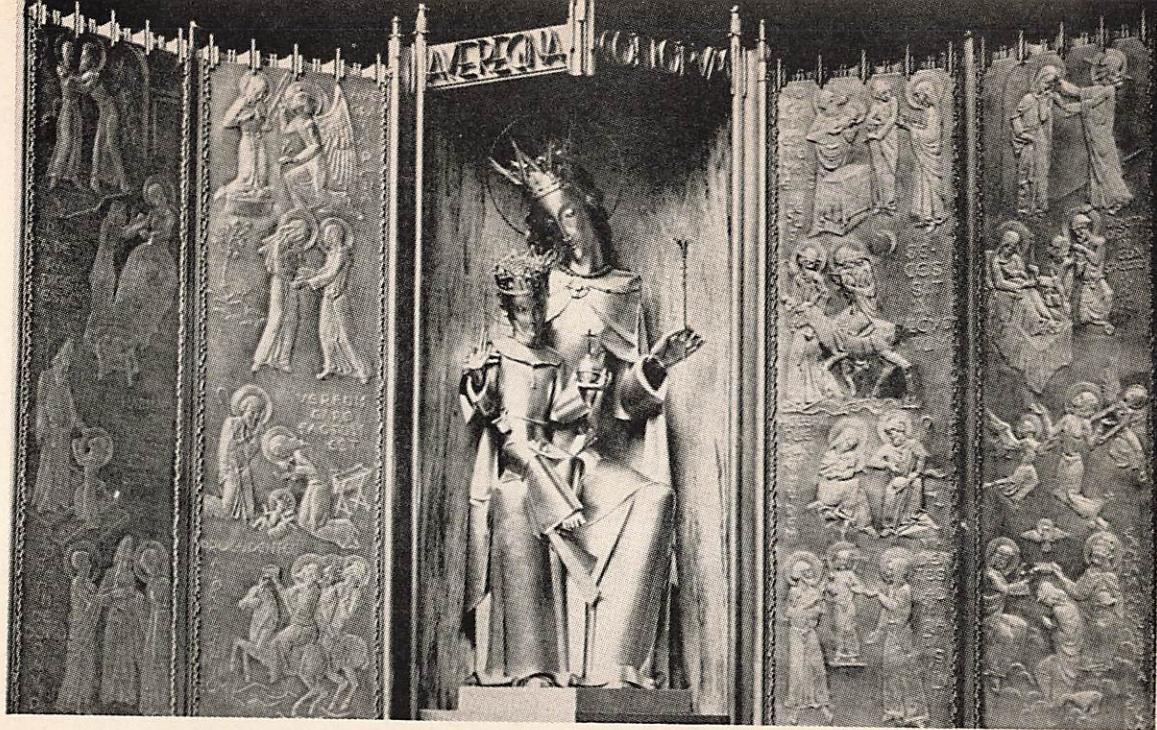


"Hand of God," by Auguste Rodin



The Edward W. Hazen Foundation

"The Grand Inquisitor," wood engraving by Fritz Eichenberg



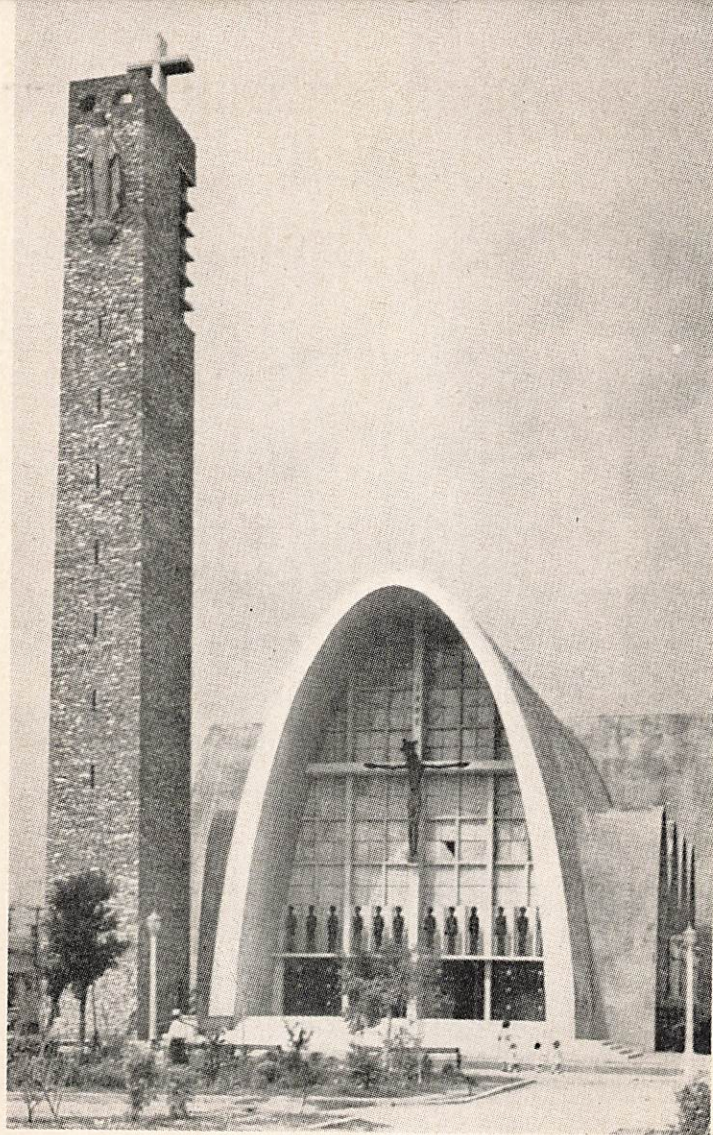
From Liturgical Arts

Retable for an Altar of Our Lady. Handchased in brass and partly gold plated, it is the work of the Brom studios, Utrecht, The Netherlands.



Hedrich-Blessing photo

Altar and chancel cross of the Plainfield (Iowa) Methodist Church, designed by Mrs. James Roach, a member of the congregation.



From Liturgical Arts

La Purisima Church, Monterrey, Mexico.
Enrique de la Mora, architect; Armando
Ravizé, engineer.

To Build Up

Part Two:

and To Plant

Chapter IV: THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP

According to the doctrine of change, you ought to put yourself to the trouble of searching for the truth; for if you die without worshiping the True Cause, you are lost. "But," say you, "if He had wished me to worship Him, He would have left me signs of His will." He has done so; but you neglect them. Seek them, therefore; it is well worth it.—Pascal, *Pensees*.¹

The Locus of Worship

The particular objective of this study book is to seek to relate worship and the arts to the context of the Church, and in particular to that extension of the Church represented by the university Christian community. As the purpose of worship can only be understood within the context of the life of the Church it is fitting to think for a moment about the level of student understanding of the Church.

Any discussion of the Church in student circles, when criticisms are being levelled, usually revolves around concepts of denominationalism, the institutional church, problems of church administration (by seminary and pre-seminary students), and the church as a building or plant on the corner of Fifth and Central. How much discussion of the Church by students concerns itself with the constructive role of the Church as the source of their Christian nurture? Is it true that only students with some kind of advanced theological interest have any sense of the Church as the Body of Christ? Even though Paul's passages² are known by most students who come out of a Sunday school and Youth Fellowship background, do they have the force

¹ Pascal, *Pensees*. New York: Random House, 1941, pp. 84, 85.

² I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Corinthians 10:16, 17.

of a warming and vital personal experience of being part of the Body which gives them life?

Many students accept their church background with no more sense of criticism than they have for the movies as a Saturday night institution, but there are students who are keenly critical of the Church. These students come from within the Church to an awareness of its limitations. Many, however, are also recruited from students who have been long-eaten by the "acids of modernity," who have become critical of religion as a whole, and particularly of its institutional manifestations, as a result of knowledge gained in sociology, history, and even religion classes.

This criticism comes also from students who have had the keenest and most penetrating Christian experience, so that from this perspective they see the middle-class respectability, the Philistinism, the show of piety, the fear of currying displeasure, the preoccupation with statistical success, the inertia against needed change, which too often are characteristic of the physical and visible church. Tragedy comes when these students are rejected by a church which has fossilized to the point that it can neither brook criticism, nor by love bring a mutual adjustment between its own life and that of a budding young prophet.

It should be added that Christian students get bound up in activities, in programs, in turning wheels to the point where they identify the Church with these efforts. All of this discussion points up the need for developing in the Christian student movement an understanding of the nature of the Church.

A. J. Coleman has commented on the distinction between a student Christian and the Christian student in a way which would compel general assent.

The contrast between that decent but superficial and schizophrenic fellow *the student Christian*, and that superbly integrated and profound chap *the Christian student* is one which arose somewhere in the dark recesses of [the World's Student Christian Federation] antiquity. . . . [This distinction] denies the possibility of a person being a Christian *and* a student with these two aspects of his life being unrelated. Either he conceives the fact that he is a student as a vocation from God, as providing the sphere in which he must discover and obey God's will, or he is not a Christian.³

³ A. J. Coleman, *The Task of the Christian in the University*. New York: Association Press, 1947, p. 83.

This distinction defines the sense in which the Christian student and the Christian student community is an arm of the Body of Christ, for the Christian student seeks a community in which he can, by a comparison of experiences and by mutual criticism, admonition, and spiritual quest discover the full meaning of this calling. At the time and place where he becomes aware of the physical and spiritual bonds of Christian fellowship the student is a member of a community marked off from his other community experiences in the classroom, at a football game, on the dance floor, in the frat house, or the union rathskeller. This community expresses its fellowship in a variety of ways, but one of the most central expressions is worship. It is here that his sense of the content and relevance of God's will, and the commission to obey it is heightened and put into proper perspective.

But this student Christian community is not a Church. The World's Student Christian Federation has said, "The SCM is not a church, but its life is part of the life of the Church. Within the SCM we have experienced a more than human fellowship across Confessional boundaries, to which we are bound to bear witness as a fact and as a gift of the Holy Spirit." The Church includes the whole range of experiences in which those, of all ages and differing cultural circumstances, called by Christ seek to discover and obey God's will. Hence, those of student age and university circumstance, with their particular problems, comprise only a part of the total life of the Church.

The experiences of death, birth, physical suffering, old age, childhood, financial success, business failure, and a host of others are, by and large, not present in the college community, while the experiences of courtship, intellectual struggle, dormitory camaraderie, homesickness, sense of nonbelongingness are a very real part of university experience.

For this reason the World's Student Christian Federation suggests for study the concept that "the particular field of responsibility of the SCM in the total life of the Church is the university. Therefore the most important contribution the SCM group as such can make to the life of the Church is to be faithful to its task of fellowship and witness in its own setting." This provides the framework for the cooperative efforts of student Christian groups

across denominational lines, as well as the framework for effort and fellowship within a particular group. The task of the Christian student and the community which he experiences with other Christian students is to mediate to the university a sense of God's will for the university.

It might be well to add that there is a real need on the part of the Church as a whole and the Christian student fellowship to understand each other better. If the commuter student restricts his religious life to the framework of his home church, never sharing the fellowship of a campus Christian group, and attends the university only to sit in the classroom, he misses his calling to make the university community the center of his challenge to Christian witness and fellowship.

Likewise, the Christian student misses his calling to the Church if he becomes so engrossed in the development of the life of fellowship and worship in the campus Christian community that he loses all possibilities of fellowship when he graduates and becomes a member of a community where the preaching, worship, and life of the church are on a broader basis than his own interests, and perhaps inferior in quality to that to which he has become accustomed. Both Church and Christian student group need a fuller understanding and relationship to each other.

What is worship?

The most creative suggestion to answer this question comes not by way of a frontal attack on the question, but by folding the question in upon itself from the flank. In Kierkegaard's devotional book, *Purity of Heart*, the twelfth meditation is titled, "The Listener's Role in a Devotional Address," and it throws great illumination on the meaning of worship. The setting for this particular meditation is the same as the setting for the whole book: the supposition that purity of heart is to be found in willing one thing, willing the good in truth, not out of hope for reward, nor fear of punishment, nor self-centeredness, nor to a limited degree, but with a complete commitment, loyalty, and willingness to suffer anything for the Good.

Within this context it is suggested that talk about willing one thing demands something more than listening on the part of the reader, it demands decisive activity, and its claim to demand decisive activity is the reason for a dis-

cussion of the relation between the speaker and the listener in a devotional address. If one watches a play or listens to a musician, one exercises the function of critic in relation to an actor or a performance, and the role of the prompter or the musical score is comparatively inconspicuous.

The individual is tempted to carry this same attitude from the secular world into things spiritual, indeed, from a worldly point of view the devotional address is held for the group of attenders, and God is no more present than in the theater. On the contrary, in worship

... the speaker is not the actor—not in the remotest sense ... the speaker is the prompter. There are no mere theatergoers present, for each listener will be looking into his own heart. The stage is eternity, and the listener, if he is the true listener (and if he is not, he is at fault) stands before God during the talk. The prompter whispers to the actor what he is to say, but the actor's repetition of it is the main concern—is the solemn charm of the art. The speaker whispers the word to the listeners. But the main concern is earnestness: that the listeners by themselves, with themselves, and to themselves, in the silence before God, may speak with the help of his address.⁴

Praise for the speaker is not aimed at, and hence eloquence in speaking is beside the point, and titillation of the audience is not aimed at, for the audience is not those in the pews but God. "God's presence is the decisive thing that changes all," and in God's presence each man must pay attention to himself.

What is involved in worship is the passing of life in review before God. Have I willed only the one thing, and is it the right one thing, is it *the* good, or is it some lesser good? The strongest argument for the divided chancel is that it puts the symbols of God's judgment, redemptive action, and continuing fellowship at the center, dramatizes the role of the minister as prompter rather than actor by placing him to the side, and prepares the participant in worship to utilize the whole service as an instigation for the review of life before the critic, God. The force forming the fellowship created in such worship is a sense of community under the judgment and mercy of God, and the common earnestness with which the true worshipers hear the question, "Have you truthfully willed only the good?"

⁴ Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948, trans. by Douglas Steere, p. 180.

Earnestness is a prerequisite for the worshiper, for without it one is in the theater, not the sanctuary of God.

The purpose of worship, thus, is to destroy the mental framework of performance—by organist, choir, minister, with an audience in the pews exercising the function of critics—and create in its place a sense of individual enactment of a drama (though within a group in which each man with his own lines is enacting the same drama) in which all of the mortals are participants, the minister as a sinner among sinners, and in which Everyman has the lead role. There must be common earnestness to review life in terms of that piercing question, “Have I willed only the good?” before the great Critic, whose judgments are meted out in terms of holy righteousness, but meted and measured within the boundaries of love and mercy. To become pure in heart is to eschew double-mindedness, to will only the good, and the pure in heart shall see God. Thus is Christian worship fulfilled.

The discovery of self

No man can avoid worshiping, either as an individual or a member of a group, and it is necessary to get out of mind the confusion that worship is an optional matter. As was suggested in the first chapter, the biblical analysis of idolatry is relevant because the question men must face is not whether they should worship, but what they should worship.

Fundamentally the word “worship” has two related meanings, worth-ship and service. Men today, as of old, serve the things they consider to be of worth. In its root meaning the word “enthusiasm” means God-possessed, and to paraphrase a saying of Jesus, “By their enthusiasms ye shall know them.” The gods men serve can be determined by what they consider to be good news (Gospel), by what makes them enthusiastic.

It follows that men are made in the image of their enthusiasms, and a discussion of worship naturally leads to the topic of the nature of man. The followers of Eros and Aphrodite, for instance, can usually be readily discerned by their appearance and by their actions, although sometimes the wolf goeth in sheep’s clothing. A man tends to be made into the image and likeness of the god he serves.

The Christian doctrine has held that man was made in the image of the Lord God, that is, he is truly himself, what God intended him to be, when he reflects the image and likeness of God. Fundamentally this means that man ought to obey the will of God, for the reflection of his will is his image in us. "Not my will but thine be done." Man is saved from original sin (the desire to pursue one's own will in pride, self-satisfied smugness, approaching life from the standpoint of "what's in it for me") by the reconciling work of God in Christ, who shows us what it is to will God's will. In this sense to be oneself is to lose oneself. To be what God intended us to be, we must recover his image in ourselves, by acknowledging our self-will as sinful, and asking for the knowledge of and power to do his will. Thus worship accomplishes within its purpose the revelation to us of our true selves. *

The playwright graphically portrays spiritual pilgrimage in the life story of Peer Gynt. Peer sets out in life to be himself and nothing else besides. In rebellion against the constraints of duty, of home, of society, it means nothing to him to ruin the lives of others. He learns from the Troll-King the motto, "To thine own self be enough." His friends, observing his life, call it "in-and-for-yourselfness," and feel that if Peer is right they can take his motto seriously and rob him of his goods. Taken into a Cairo insane asylum by its members who want to make him King, Peer almost sees the light, for as he accuses them of being out of their minds, out of their selves, their spokesman replies,

Outside themselves? Oh, no, you're wrong. It's here that men are most themselves—theirself and nothing but themselves—sailing with outspread sails of self. Each shuts himself in a cask of self, the cask stopped with a bung of self and seasoned in a well of self. None has a tear for others' woes or cares what any other thinks. We are ourselves in thought and voice—ourselves up to the very limit; and, consequently, if we want an Emperor, it's very clear that you're the man.⁵

In old age Peer returns to his native Norway, unrecognized, to find that no one has a good word to say for him. On a forest hillside, meditating over his life-long pursuit of being himself, he absent-mindedly peels a wild wood's onion and finds that even as the onion has no core, no center, neither has his life. Threadballs in the forest re-

⁵ *Eleven Plays of Henrik Ibsen*, New York: Modern Library, p. 1138.

mind him of thoughts never brought to birth; the withered leaves, of watchwords unused; the sighing of the wind, of songs from the heart unsung; the dewdrops, of tears of compassion unshed; the broken straws, of deeds undone.

Then Death's Messenger comes for Peer, telling him he is fit neither for a place on high nor for him of the Cloven Hoof, but as a failure in life, only for the Casting Ladle where his soul will be melted down and his identity lost. To lose the self-identity he has struggled for is too much for Peer and he argues with vehemence against this fate. Death's Messenger says, "But, my dear Peer, there is no need for you to make so great a fuss about so small a thing; because you never yet have been yourself. What difference can it make to you if, when you die, you disappear?" Peer replies, "I've never been myself! Ha-ha! You almost make me laugh. . . . If you searched my inmost being, you would find I'm Peer right through, and nothing else." Peer is granted a reprieve if he can find anyone to speak for him, and as he meets the old Troll-King, Peer learns that he cannot claim to have resisted temptation for he has been true to the trolls' motto, "To thyself be enough." When he again meets Death's Messenger he begs to be told "what it is really to be one's self." The reply comes, "To be one's self is to slay one's self. But as perhaps that explanation is thrown away on you, let's say: to follow out, in everything, what the Master's intention was."⁶

To follow out the Master's intention is to be our true selves. To reflect his will like a signboard is to recover his image in us. The high moments that fulfill the purpose of worship come when confronted by the overwhelming power of his righteousness and his redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ, we confess our sinful self-will, and pray for the indwelling of his spirit that we may know and obey his will.

Worship and the communication of truth

The purpose of worship is to produce *participation* in the drama of sin and salvation and the recovery of selfhood, rather than simply moral and religious instruction on the one hand, or re-enactment of the drama for the congrega-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1175.

tion, as in the Catholic Mass, on the other. It is relevant, then, to ask whether there is any communication of truth in worship, and if so, how and what?

Ordinarily we think of truth being communicated through language, by words, through the medium of propositions, oral or written. It is an elementary philosophical distinction, to say that facts are neither true nor false, they simply are; it is what we say about them, propositionally, which is true or false. Nature *is*, descriptions of nature are true or false. Hence, communication and language are necessary to each other, and as they presuppose a community, linguistic truth is a possession of the community to be treasured and developed within the community.

Can such a description of truth, if taken as the only adequate description, do justice to what we call Christian truth? A theological description of the essentials of the Christian faith—God making himself known to man in the form of a servant to reconcile man to himself—might well stand the tests of logical consistency, but would its basic starting point, the Incarnation, be capable of verification within the normal framework of the verification of the truth of historical propositions? Historical evidence would only yield probable truth, rather than certain truth, because of the unavailability of all of the relevant evidence. This objective probability is not the certitude of faith.

Suppose it possible to produce a conclusive proof that, in the historical Jesus, God did become man, would intellectual assent to the conclusiveness of this proof, an assent to what would then be an objectively established truth, be the same as the "knowledge" that God in Christ died for my sins? Do the traditional proofs for the existence of God and descriptions of his nature, if accepted by the reason as convincing, produce the kind of faith that cries out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth?"

A distinction is needed here between two types of meaning, representative and presentative. A descriptive statement of fact, made in accordance with the canons of logic and grammar, is true to the extent to which it represents the facts. But facts have a meaning above and beyond that represented by a literal and accurate description of them. As events they have a symbolic expressiveness that catches hold of the feelings, emotions, the will, and lifts one to an empathic response that involves the whole

being, not just reasoning powers. The most significant influences in life are often the directly presented and expressive meanings occurrences have for man's total being.

It is at this point that the communication of Christian truth comes in. The basic Christian fact is not a set of propositions. God's supreme revelation is not in words, but in the Word become flesh, a person, an event in history. For the Christian this is *the definitive event*, definitive for it defines the meaning of history, it defines most fully God's nature, it redefines man as his true self, it defines the Church. But the definition is not verbal, though it may be given a verbal expression. Revelation and reason are distinct for God reveals his truth in a life, not in an argument. This truth is appropriated not objectively by reasoning about it, for objectively it is only a probability. It is appropriated subjectively, as a passionate venture upon the promise of God in Christ, despite its objective uncertainty.

┐ To try to summarize this discussion by restating the essential point: the communication of truth in Christian worship comes about as a result of the fact that God's saving event, the intrusion of eternity into time, is repeatable in each and every worshiper. As the worshiper finds himself confronted by God, and sees his life in its true dimensions, the meaning of the atoning life of Christ becomes re-enacted in him. His confession and repentance are an acknowledgment that by Christ he is judged, his experience of the power of love regenerates him, makes him a new man in Christ, his experience of Christ's victory in his life is a warranty of Christ's victory over the world, and hence in time he participates in the eternal reign of God over his kingdom.

└ To the man of intellectual bent, this experience in worship carries with it the Divine commission to develop a rational ordering of life from the standpoint or presupposition of the event of Christ Jesus, but his description—and this is what theology is—is not the event. It gains its impetus and life from the event, and is true within the domain of logic, a different domain from that of worship in which the truth of the event is known.

Worship is inseparably linked with the whole of life

The claims of the Christian life are total claims. As the

self is rediscovered, so the world is rediscovered, and as true worship requires that the total life be brought under the scrutiny of God, so worship fails if it does not bring man's response to God into contact with life as a whole, and the world as a whole, with the values therein contained. F. R. Barry says,

The conclusion seems therefore to follow that these other and manifold forms of value—the claims, enrichments, interests and activities of the actual world in which our lives are spent—must be brought inside Christian worship. Not in the hope of making it attractive to a larger number of people by adding a topical interest to our services, but for two, more profound, reasons. First, because they are part of God's work and integral to the cause of His Kingdom. If God is the Creator of the world, then the establishment of His sovereignty—when His will is done on earth, as it is in heaven—cannot be confined to religious concerns. Secondly, because a right attitude toward the so-called secular interests in life is part of what is meant by conversion; and conversion is, for the Christian religion, the end for which worship is intended.⁷

As an implication of this the arts not only have a significant role to play in worship and the life of the Church, but also, because they are expressive of man's highest perceptions, they have their fullest import within the Christian life. A man who is a Christian and an artist will no longer see the two as accidentally related, but will discover that being a Christian artist is his vocation under God's rule. It would be both stupid and a folly to suppose that this would mean that his life is given over to painting religious subjects. His art would be the vehicle for the interpretation of creation and life, an interpretation he would make as a Christian.

The Christian, by creating a right attitude toward the secular (cf. pp. 12 ff), not only sees the secular, rightfully, as part of God's creation, but is also able to make common cause with those outside Christianity at the point at which they emphasize truths which take root in the universe God created. Barry has developed this theme persuasively in his *Recovery of Man*. There are values in the secular world which provide the subsoil for the fullest nurture of the Christian life, or of the life of *any sensitive person*. Where sensitivity, appreciative capacity, compassion are not nourished in a total culture, then Christianity will

⁷ *The Relevance of the Church*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, pp. 128, 129.

suffer, for men will become increasingly callous and incapable of religious experience. "There can be a kind of spiritual soil erosion, so that Christianity cannot take root and grow; or the thorns may spring up and choke it. . . . All men of good will must work together to revive the inherited values of civilization which are, as Christians believe, God-given to man."⁸

Our modern world desperately needs community, and the Christian man is often in danger of destroying community by overstressing the antithesis between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian and the Christian community must maintain contact and two-way communication with those individuals and those groups working most creatively in the arts, music, literature, and on the stage, where the meanings and problems of our common existence are often most incisively presented. To lose contact with men of science, with their deep passion for the discovery of truth within the rubric of scientific methods, is a fatal loss of value for the Christian community. To fail to see the great significance of the insights of psychology and the social sciences, and develop this very significance in discussion and interchange because of a common concern for the subjects of these studies, man and society, would be a loss to the world and to the Christian community. But this loss is encouraged too often, and the destruction of the subsoil from which the Christian Gospel can take root is curried, as we create any basic antithesis between the Christian Gospel and the whole of life.

If the Church had claimed for God's service the new learning of the sixteenth century, if it had sought to baptize into Christ the new biology of the nineteenth century, or the new physics of the twentieth, how much alienation and estrangement from the Christian faith would we have been spared today! What ruin and tragedy might have been avoided! Both the Church and the universities are paying dear for that fatal blindness. It will need great insight and humility on both sides to overtake the consequences. We must have collaboration on a new basis to rescue man from his spiritual bankruptcy.⁹

Because worship has the fundamental objective of producing commitment of the will to a life of Christian love in action it will produce a search for a social ethic, for a

⁸ Barry, *Recovery of Man*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949, p. 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

proper esthetics, for an understanding of science and the natural order, and for insight into the structure of the nature of the man called by God to exemplify his will in love. Hence it will seek to bring the significant claims, values, enrichments, and activities of the actual world inside Christian worship.

Chapter V: THE ROLE OF ART

. . . Margaret of Navarre, a great lady and a fine wit . . . coined the following metaphor: "Even the best-trained dog cannot stifle his bark forever."

In connection with this maxim by the Queen of Navarre, I am put in mind of the customary way, among our people, of inquiring about the cause of another person's anger: "Say, who killed your little doggies?" It is as if one were to ask, "Who robbed you of your love, of your secret joys, etc.?" Please note that this chapter is not intended to be profound.

—Machado De Assis¹

Art, and one's own genius

Meddling with one's taste in art, like tampering with the objects of his religious loyalties, is more likely to produce indignant reaction than an inquiring response. An implication that the object of joy is really not worthy of such devotion is an affront to a person's very being.

It is not difficult to realize that this is so. The fuming of a man can be monumental when he has been assured, probably with an irritating air of superiority, that the picture he cherishes of Christ brooding over a dreamy Jerusalem is but a sentimental bit of romanticism. Members of a youth group at worship in unaccustomed silence before a candlelit print of Christ in a gold gilt frame, can rise to a towering fury if someone should suggest that the interpretation of the object of their devotion is a shoddy one indeed.

In these days when the romantic spirit is out of favor and the sentimental is felt to be disgracefully puerile, what was once a compliment has become a slur. A person's approach to art may be in the romantic vein but to be told so is an affront. He may be a sentimentalist, cherishing the nostalgic and the homey, but if someone so defines his attitude he is insulted.

The fact that artistic affront and dissension can result in high words and some outrage is obvious. Just why some

¹ Machado De Assis, *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, Noonday Press, p. 199.

innocent splashes of paint on a canvass or chips off a chunk of stone can result in caustic manners is another question, and a most interesting one.

The appreciation of art, or its lack, is felt to cut close to the heart of being. There is a relation between art and goodness, beauty and truth that the individual cannot evade by the flippant assertion, "I don't know anything about art. I'm a low-brow. I'll leave art to the snobs." A person cannot so easily cut himself loose from his own genius, which is to make things as excellently as he can. He may choose to ignore the compartmentalized "art" of the museums or the art departments. But if he is an athlete he will make an art of his basketball playing. His ability in handling the ball will be a thing of beauty and a joy to behold. He may be a salesman, and there is such a thing as the art of salesmanship. She may be only a seamstress, but stitches may well have much more perfection and harmony than the splashes marking the painter's brush work.

In a less-sophisticated and better-integrated age than our own the mystics of art and craftsmanship were one. Man had not yet become sufficiently stupid to assert the autonomy, and irrelevance, of art.

The complex culture, in which western man now lives, forces specialization. Saul and David could never have attempted to think of their songs and dances, their plowing and planting, warring and administration, and their worship of Jahweh as anything but one whole, however imperfect. Today, that a president of the nation should have a painting created by himself in his office is occasion of much wonder if not bafflement. When a prominent New Testament scholar wrote a novel his colleagues began whispering that he had lost his scholarly touch and the main suspicion by practical Americans of a former director of the Library of Congress rested upon the fact that he was an eminent poet. They had not read his poetry, but someone so obviously useless as a poet, was quite unfit for a governmental position.

Just as religion has been pushed into its own compartment and separated from the practical affairs of men, so art has been separated from the common life. It is just as important for art to be recognized in all the affairs of

existence as it is for religion to stand up in the midst of secular affairs and be so identified.

In fact, the roles of religion and art must not be separated.

Faith and art

When the writer was a youngster, he was taken to see a film that so terrified him that sleep was nearly impossible for several nights. The name of the picture has been forgotten, but not some of the details: crowds of people forced inexorably up a stairway, sacrifices to a huge devouring machine. The people were pushed in through a glowing, cavernous mouth in which huge pistons and spinning connecting rods ground up the crowds.

That long-ago film was not entertainment; in fact, for the boy, it was a horrible vision; but a vision that was true: *faith requires appropriate sacrifice.*

If faith is in machines, crowds of people must expect to be destroyed by the monsters they have created. If the faith is commerce, then they must expect the starvation of the Midas touch. If the faith is comfort, they must sacrifice exercise to vibrators and be smothered in rubber foam.

The critical significance of faith is that it cannot be used; rather, it uses its devotee. One does not possess faith, it possesses him. One does not carry faith, like a parcel to the post office. Faith carries him. One is used by faith for its purposes, he cannot use faith for his purposes.

Spurious gods use their devotees just as surely as does the one true God. Bogus faiths demand their sacrifices and carry their own requirements as surely and as demandingly as that by which the Christian is held. When loss of faith in Almighty God is twisted to faith in idols (from creatures to nothingness) the end result is chaos.

There is one essential difference: salvation. The false faith gets its sacrifice and the price is death. The Christian faith demands its sacrifice, but to die is to live. The false faith exalts the man that he may more ingloriously die, like Mussolini in the butcher's mart; the true faith reduces man to the slave that he might more gloriously be exalted.

Therefore, if art and worship are integrally related, if they are not simply brothers, but twins in the faith, then a man as artist does not use his art for man's ends, but art uses him to glorify God. When man starts using worship

for his own purposes (worship to stimulate a feeling of national patriotism, worship to create the mood so that a man will give generously to a cause, worship as an exercise which is a prelude to another really important function—the sermon by which the preacher will prove his brilliance and oratorical skill) he is breaking the most terrible of prohibitions—those against setting up idols. He not only sets up the idols, he falls flat on his face and worships them.

✓ *True art is man in his vocation of glorifying God.*

In this sense all that man does, as a child of faith, is art—homemaking, studentship, lovemaking and cooking. If each function is performed, as by Brother Lawrence, for the love of God, and he does it as well and as beautifully as he can, he does it as an artist. His talents are being used by God for a purpose.

The talents are different, and therefore while some persons are artists in their vocations as mechanics, there are some whose vocation is the creation of the forms in dance, architecture, literature, painting, sculpture and music which will reflect God and interpret his reality. It is the exploitation of this particular talent which immediately concerns us.

It is obvious by now that the use of the term “artist” has several meanings. There is the one sense that every man is artist when he strives for excellence in what he does or what he makes. There is another level in which he deliberately creates forms which are in themselves arty.

Art is also integral to the personal character and the social activities of man. It is identifiable as a certain aspect of existence but cannot be separated from his life as a human being.

Certain people have, however, chosen to be self-conscious artists. Art and its creation, in any of a huge variety of possibilities and combinations has become a full-time vocation. The composition of the symbols of art, which are infinite, is the artist's life, whether he be writer, sculptor, dancer or whatever.

The artist is not engaged in creating beauty. As Denis de Rougemont insists, it is the false artists alone who try to make something beautiful or flattering. The artist's real

aim is to "express or describe realities at any cost, and even at the price of ugliness, if necessary."²

Beauty, the secular and communication

Art, which is both the testimony of and a witness to God, is not apart from this world although it is separate from the natural. Esthetic values and the struggle to interpret them are subsidiary, and possibly beside the point, because the artist is made to reflect God, not beauty. The common life of man and art is one fabric. The presuppositions of being and those of art are not to be divided. Man, because he is man, is also artistic. His interpretations vary, but not his nature. "The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist," as the Indian Coomaraswamy has insisted.

Because man is man he is secular. Because man is man he is artist. The secular and the artistic are not apart. But they are separate aspects of the world in which the creature lives.

As a religious being, man seeks both to interpret his nature and himself through the arts. If his art becomes not too self-conscious, it is a quality of whatever he does. When it does become compartmentalized, then the self-conscious artist's works are in danger of detachment. He forms his own coteries, formulates his self-conscious principles while the common life gives expression to the "art of . . ." because all arts are thought to be for specialists and the ordinary individual would no more play with art than he would cut out his own appendix. Art for the artist, medicine for the doctors, plumbing for the plumbers, and the amateurs beware!

As Andre Malraux insists, with the work of art the enigma is the analysis of what the work of art is. This is different from the esthetic problem which asks what it should be or should have been.

Asking what the work of art is raises the complicated questions of communication. But it is the essential problem if we would understand better the role which art plays in the life of the Church today.

² Denis de Rougemont, "Religion and the Mission of the Artist" in S. R. Hopper, editor, *Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature*, Harper & Brothers, 1952, p. 177.

The artist exists not alone to amuse himself, nor even to express himself. As England's famous sculptor, Henry Moore, whose works have often been labeled as incomprehensible, testifies: "My desire for . . . a destination for my work shows that I am trying, not merely to express my own feelings or emotions for my own satisfaction, but also to *communicate* those feelings or emotions to my fellow men."³

A person, in his vocational capacity as artist, and which we today tend unduly to compartmentalize, seeks to compose those symbols by which he can communicate with others. They are the means by which he tells the story of what life is about.

As a religious artist he stands not outside the secular life, but in the role of one who judges it and comments upon the secular in the light of revelation. He illuminates its meaning. He may stand opposed to the contemporary manifestations of the common life. His art forms may symbolize the tension he feels between what he knows to be valid and enduring and the cultural life which threatens his values. He tries to present, not necessarily represent, the meaning of his time.

The founder of modern dance, Isadora Duncan, in spite of her confusion, intuitively knew the role of the artist:

The great mistake with modern dancing is that it seeks to invent when it should be content with having found. Man cannot invent. He can only find. Modern dancing is not the result of discoveries in Nature, nor of analogies to her. It is the result of geometrical and mechanical calculations. The chorus of Greek tragedies was the highest summit ever attained in the dance.⁴

One of the difficulties that the layman has experienced in his attempts to appreciate modern plastic art has been the change of pace taken by the artist. It might be said that he has taken canons of music and dance and applied them to the plastic arts.

In the music of Bach there is no attempt to be representational. The listener is utterly lost if he tries to find a story that is told in Bach's music or to ask that it conjure up some picture for the mind's eye to enjoy. He was one

³ *Art News*, Nov. '52, p. 24.

⁴ "Fragments from a Dancer's Philosophy," *Dance* magazine, June, 1927, p. 86. "25 Years of American Dance."

whose every note was marked down for the glory of God and who never saw any such false wall as a divider between this world and that of God.

The dance composition of Martha Graham, endlessly experimental, left dependence on exotic draperies and decorative frills, and scrutinized the conventions of this world to their very depths. She "foresook the outside shell and danced the 'reason why.'" It was not a remote and misty view but one in which the vocabulary of movement captured the meaning of living. Some found her "graceless"; she was, instead, breaking with the pretty that the dual sense of doom and hope might be made evident.

The contemporary artist has been freed by the photographer. He can now concentrate on presenting the symbolic meaning of reality and not its literal representation. No longer required to copy (the camera and the film do it much better) he has found the freedom to search for meanings.

The painter or sculptor may not attempt to represent the surface appearance of a woman, a tree, or a vase, but what he finds to be another, and deeper, level of reality. This is not to deny the reality of surface appearance. That which is material and obvious is real. It is, however, an insistence that the obvious does not exhaust the meaning, just as man cannot be defined in terms of his creatureliness, although he is obviously, and in reality, creature.

Is it not curious that the religionists have consistently fought the materialist view of life and just as consistently attempted to bind certain of their artists to it? The priests and the preachers have taught and insisted that reality is much more than meets the eye, but have excoriated the artist, when in a different medium than speech or music, he attempted to say the same thing—the reality of the flower may be different from that which meets the eye? Why must certain of the arts copy nature when such a rule could not possibly apply to all of the arts? What, in nature, does a church building copy? (It is ridiculous to insist that it copies a cave, or a grove of trees.) Bach, supreme in music, did not copy from nature or the books, but as we listen to the *St. Matthew Passion*, so real is the presentation (not the representation) that the anxious questioning of the disciples becomes our own: "Lord, is

it I?" It is on a level, however, where never before have we found such poignant meaning.

The artist working in the Gothic mode struggled in an era when portraiture of the Christ was a matter of indifference. It was the spiritual reality that counted and so he could construct images of the same being that looked entirely different. The artists who made Byzantine ikons had not only an indifference to human representation, but an aversion, and it was from the Byzantine sculptures that the medieval artist learned. The point is, however, that the artist of the empire of Byzantium exactly expressed the thought and life of the magnificent but hieratical convictions of the Eastern Church—dogmatic, imperial and iconolatrous.

The artist of the Renaissance sought to emphasize the humanness of the Christ and the lifelike portrait became dominant and da Vinci would hunt long and diligently for the proper model for his painting.

The work of a romantic poet was an affront to those who believed in the classic proportions of the poetic models. He was long on the sentimental feeling of death and short on the control of emotion. The decadent poet of the first decades of this century was a confused voice to most readers, but was a portent of the night of nihilism that even the most insensitive would come to recognize as the ultimate threat to all rational values.

It is one of the curiosities of our time that the religiously sophisticated have often remained artistically adolescent. They recognized the threat to the Christian structure of life which materialistic cults pose. They were quick to discern the demonic character of the false radiance of communism, fascism, and various other of the militarized patterns of social organization.

They preached and wrote about the inner emptiness of the superficial culture that cherished things above values. They were quick to discern the loneliness of the crowd culture and the despair of men that had lost the anchors of belief. But when the professional artist, with his techniques, through his symbols of form and color and words tried to convey aesthetically the same message of anguish and emptiness, he found arrayed against him not only the apologists of the superficial but the very ones

who attacked what he attacked. They were willing to grow up in their philosophic or theological criticism but remained infants in their perception of the symbols of art.

The divorce of religion and the secular has been analogous to the split between art and the common life. The specialists have relegated the religious to the seminaries and departments of religion. The temper of the times has felt that art has a place, but it is an esoteric field which the amateur must avoid. Art is for the art schools and the museums, and practical men will eschew it.

Art and tradition

A fine New Testament scholar who made one of the biblical translations that many have loved to read and quote, Dr. Moffatt, insisted that "religion must have a touch of the archaic."

Art, which is religious because it celebrates the faith which uses it, cannot forego tradition. Certainly a spectacular kind of contemporary idolatry is that which would cut itself off from the past and revel in new forms. It is, of course, entirely meaningless. Nothing could be more confused than some of the contemporary efforts to create in new directions but with no place in the past from which to start. It is no accident, therefore, that some of the "modern" artists have quit even paint brush and pallet or chisel and stone and are hunting around for the debris of this mechanical age. Then, with plastic cement and the waste of the streets, they putter around making combinations that are the epitome of the meaningless.

Their lesson is double: 1. the utter futility of the artist who gives allegiance to a false God, and 2. the foolishness of trying to escape the past.

One can have a sense of direction only if he has his bearings. Contrariwise, knowing not where he has been, where he is nor where he is going, he cannot go even in circles, he can but wander aimlessly.

The commercial artist at least has some bearings—the demands of man. The naturalistic novelist has a minimum sense of what motivates man—sex, hunger, shelter, and a desire to escape death. The nationalist at least exalts a community, even if it is divided and puny.

Only a few worship the god of No, another name for the god of confusion.

The religious artist certainly must have a sense of history and of destiny. He does not cut himself off from the past, he explores it for that which will help him in his vocation. He has not much that is new to say, he has, however, the obligation to explore new ways of saying it. Because he invests tradition with his own originality, the result comes to have the dimension of honest art.

Regard for tradition does not mean a puppet copying the past. That destroys the artist as creator, or more properly, as one seeking to signify the meaning of creation. The pale copies of romantic or classic forms are not art, as ecclesiastical officials commonly suppose. They may even be the destroyers of art, for they tend toward an idolatry of the past. But the resources of tradition, taken by the artist and resolved into vibrant and living witnesses to his faith, like the head of Christ by Rouault, are art with a past, a present, and a sense of direction.

When Rouault in 1932 painted "Christ Mocked by Soldiers," the drama of the event in the past was re-enacted through the medium of his work. It was the event he celebrated, not as Bellini, Durer or even Bosch would have done, but as he felt an artist living in the third decade of the twentieth century must do. Thereby he has reflected eternity; he has imaged God.

It need not be that the specific details of the event of Christ's mission to this world be retold. This meaning, however, of that drama cannot be escaped. Max Beckmann's three-paneled painting, "Departure," is not the specific events of the passion, but it is "man's calvary and resurrection, his agony and liberation."⁵ Like the Joseph story as told by Thomas Mann, the event of life and death, of trial and resurrection is the drama which eternity requires to be told. The religious artist has caught the significance of the event. He is thereby tied with the past. His enactment of the drama is in the present, and its direction is that of the glory of God.

⁵ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *What is Modern Painting?* The Museum of Modern Art, 1946, p. 25.

Elastic limitations of the liturgical

One facet of religious art, the liturgical, places certain restrictions upon the artist, but paradoxically leaves to him surprising freedom. As has been noted, there is a didactic and utilitarian aspect to liturgical art which is not necessarily present in the art which ordinarily comes to our attention. It cannot even flirt with the romantic pretense of "art for art's sake." Liturgical art has a particular purpose and responsibility, sharply to be differentiated from that art which, like a prism, is the broken and refracted artist's vision of reality. In the revival of the arts in Roman Catholicism, some of the most interesting work at present being done is liturgical. One leafing through the volumes of *Liturgical Arts*, published by the Liturgical Arts Society, is confronted over and over again with the amazing versatility with which modern artists have brought to this genre, which in the obvious opinion would be hidebound and bare. Crucifixes, stations, chalices and altars have shared in an amazingly interesting group of compositions.

There is a level at which this should not be unexpected. The cheap, polychromed religious articles displayed for sale in the typical "religious arts" store, are not typical of liturgical art. As Cyril C. Richardson has reminded us,⁶ liturgical art attempts to bring the Divine close; closer than is comfortable. And, like modern art which experiences the "mysterious dimension of objects," it exposes us, in part, to the mysterious depths of creation. The object itself, has something of the holy inherently within it. Its stylized forms are not subject to the canons of realism. It is the meaning and the inherent quality that are important.

The singing of hymns is a liturgical act for most Protestants, and the hymns are themselves a special kind of art. Certain music is not designed for hymns, just as certain poetry cannot be sung. Simply to call "Life is Like a Mountain Railway" a hymn does not take it out of the field of the slightly ridiculous, even if it is announced in a holy tone, nor can the music for "Afternoon of a Faun" be at home in the sanctuary. The hymn has utilitarian limitations and they must be observed. But it can be profoundly moving art sounding the depths of "O,

⁶ "Some Reflections on Liturgical Art," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, March, 1953, pp. 24-28.

God, our help in ages past," or the challenge of Bunyan's "He who would valiant be."

A church structure must not be another International Harvester merchandise mart, neither need it be a superficial imitation of bygone inspirations. Like all liturgical art, it must meet the worship needs of the community of Christ. It must be, in a special way, God's home. But the finest church work in the last decades has come from those places, particularly in Europe, where the liturgical tradition is the strongest. Its limitations can be a real freedom. It is not limited to such ecclesiastical traditions, however. The wonderful aspect of it is, that like the Plainfield Methodist Church, in a little town in Iowa, it does not take a huge congregation and much money—only a willingness to try, to the best of the artist's ability, in response to community and traditional needs, to make the Creator to be reflected in this natural world of buildings.

Art looks into you

Art looks into a person, it sounds his depths. There is a difference between seeing a work of art and disinterestedly looking at it. Music must be more than listened to, it must be heard. It speaks of real things, not synthetic.

It follows that the role of art is to reflect reality. It has meaning. In the Christian view, art is not designed to be beautiful, it is designed to show God's world to man the creature. It is less to be enjoyed than explored. Art, in this sense, is not a problem of aesthetics; it is an attempt to signify that which is basic.

The faith of the artist is paramount, for he is used by it. It will require of him the proper sacrifice. He is possessed by his faith, and because of that fact, his art is not a bag of tricks he carries, but a role he plays in the drama of redemption.

His art, to be real, must have significance for his day. It must convey meanings about the life which he experiences. This makes him ill-content with copying the past. Because his problem is not beauty, but significance, he is not even concerned with pleasing folks. He only wants to present his convictions about the Creator. Whether or not the established churches recognize his art as religious is beside the point. As the devout Fred Nagler insists, "I

paint only for the glory of Christ," but only one ecclesiastical organization has purchased a painting by this great artist.

Liturgical art both cramps the artist's vision and, paradoxically, leaves him great freedom. The liturgical is, in most forms, compatible with the modern because while its basic purpose is assistance in our prayers, it seeks to bring to our attention the depths of the mysterious.

Myth and the arts

Thomas Mann has insisted that the mythical is "... the eternally human, eternally recurring, timeless."⁷

While the artist interprets the significance of that which is mythical sometimes by the liturgical representation, more often by the presentational effort of poem or novel, symphony or dance, painting or sculpture, drama or chant, the importance of the myth extends also to those who consume, who are the "audience." The meaning of the myth must be sought by the restless, longing people who would know the vital relationships of life.

The myth is real without being factual. It is the "falsely spoken but true," or more literally, "as deceivers, yet true."⁸ Like religion it may tell many little falsehoods because there is no other way to make real a great truth. This is why the particularist, the scientist (social, historical or natural), is suspicious of the myth. Nevertheless it is the pattern for giving significance to spiritual memory and current meaning.

A myth contains the story that is preserved in popular memory and that helps to bring to life some deep stratum buried in the depth of the human spirit. The divorce of the subject from object as the result of enlightened criticism may provide material for historical knowledge; but in so far as it destroys the myth and dissociates the depths of time from those of man, it only serves to divorce man from history.⁹

Religion demands that its world view, that is, its myth, be enacted. It is the role of the arts to make the myth known. It is to make real both that which is apparent and that which is hidden.

⁷ Thomas Mann, "The Joseph Novels," *The Atlantic*, February, 1943, p. 93.

⁸ II Corinthians 6:8.

⁹ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, pp. 23-24.

The truth of the myth is more abiding than the facts, which is why almost all arts other than the literary have been suspicious of scientism. The role of the arts is not to invent myths but to identify them. If illusions are constructed, it is only to reveal the greatest realities.

The very universality of God's creation makes it difficult, if not impossible, to be expressed directly and factually. It is the artist's burden that he seek the primary and symbolically tell the rest of mankind about it.

It is the role of those religiously concerned to immerse themselves that they too might see what the artist's work symbolizes. The myth is one form which religion must take; the artistic is the dramatic language (in many forms) that gives it expression among men.

Part Three: Transforming Culture

Chapter VI: WORSHIPFUL WITNESS

"Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world," says Pascal. "Do not be caught asleep then!" That is the present peril. Even Peter slept while Divinity agonized. We too can sleep—and in so many ways!—with piety, with reason, with the law, with righteous indignation for secondary causes. . . . How long, then, will the world pay tribute to the able men who teach us—that inestimable comfort that is also our pain—how to sleep?

—Stanley Hopper¹

"I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth"

The Christian student looks forward to "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"² because in worship he gains citizenship in this city. But the Christian knows also that God sent his Son into the world because he loved the world and so that the world might be saved through him.³ This is good news not simply for man but for the world. God's desire to transform the world and human culture and human beings is attested to by his activity in history. It is expressed in the gift of the Son, is carried on by the witness of the Holy Spirit, and by the Church which is Christ's Body in the world.

If Jesus Christ is King forever, Lord of all life and my own life, then his lordship must be attested to in total experience, and to sleep, no matter how well rationalized, is to fail him. "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus"⁴ is followed by that great passage about "taking the form of a servant,"⁵ that every knee and tongue, in heaven, *on the earth*, and under the earth should acknowledge the lordship of the servant. "Have *this* mind in you!" becomes

¹ Stanley Hopper, *The Crisis of Faith*, Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944, p. 177.

² Hebrews 11:10.

³ John 3:16, 17.

⁴ Phil. 2:5.

⁵ Phil. 2:7.

an imperative for action. The Christian's citizenship in the eternal kingdom, while living now, provides the point of Archimedian leverage by which to move the world.

Faith and humor in common experience

If Jesus Christ is Lord, then every area of life and experience will be subject to him. Personal relationships, business dealings, studenthood, social involvements, political activity, artistic expression, all come under the transforming of the reign of Christ, a reign of righteousness and love, of grace and truth. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God."⁶ Experiences of fear, suffering, anger, love, hope, even humor, will all take on a new orientation if in the passion of faith one serves God. Someone has said that if Christians really believed what they profess they would be ten times more excited than they are. To be kindled into fire by the experience in worship of being called out to serve him is to receive the divine commission to become, to change the metaphor, a transformer with divine power.

Humor is considered a resource for life. Sad Sack, Bill Mauldin's Willie and Joe had great meaning to men when their lives seemed most devoid of meaning. They could find sanity, keep a grasp on themselves, by laughing at themselves. When an argument becomes personal and constructive discussion impossible, a well-timed quip or joke will restore the lines of communication. Laughter breaks the ice of silent bashfulness, when a boy and girl on their first date are at a loss for words. Humor is a resource, but the man of faith sees it in a new light as distinctively related to his faith.

A Freud expresses his faith in *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, Bergson in *De Rire*, but the relationship of humor to the Christian faith is even more capable of very significant development. "Humor is, in fact, a prelude to faith; and laughter is the beginning of prayer."⁷ Niebuhr develops the relationship of humor to faith in terms of their common basis in the fact of life's incongruities, and

⁶ Romans 12:2.

⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Discerning the Signs of the Times*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946, p. 111.

their symbolic expression of man's ability to transcend himself. The student who prides himself on looking like a fashion plate gets caught in the rain five minutes before a heavy date; plans for education and career get derailed by a letter from "Ike"; the vacuum cleaner salesman pushes the wrong button and shoots the dirt in the housewife's face; a young lady announces her engagement and has a thrilling whirl of showers only to have the engagement broken; the prodigal son comes to himself in the swine pen. Our neat schemes, our petty prides, our cherished hopes, no matter how carefully guarded, are always on the brink of upset or destruction. Life doesn't always honor the checks presented on her bank and sometimes turns them back marked "Insufficient Funds." This is the material for cartoons, but it is also the material on which faith is built.

Humor deals with the immediate incongruities of life, faith with the ultimate ones. Humor cannot deal with personal disaster, but it does provide a key resource in the building of the kind of character that can in faith make catastrophe the ground for God's creative action in life. Humor is insufficient in the face of death, but the Christian individual can transcend himself to laugh off his immediate problems, because he knows his ultimate ones are in God's hands. The transcendence of self under the judgment of laughter is closely related to the transcendence of self as in worship one discovers life under the judgment of God. Without faith that life transcends the dimensions of this world, all life becomes vain, human effort seems futile in the face of catastrophe, and even the possibility of humor disappears for "of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what has it done?"

The capacity of the man of faith to say with the Psalmist, "How happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," or "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice," knows that of the joy of faith laughter is one expression. The dramatic possibilities inherent in the certainty of faith that there is no death, a certainty producing contagious, constructive, tension- and anxiety-destroying laughter, are exploited to the full by Eugene O'Neill in his play, "Lazarus Laughed."

So, too, faith throws the experience of anger into proper

light, for anger is related to man's proneness to sin as well as to the rigorous requirements of righteousness. The Christian faith enables a man to channel the force of the emotion of anger against entrenched forces of unrighteousness. This is one of the meanings of being "consumed with a zeal for the House of the Lord." At the same time the life of faith knows the condemnation of sin on an anger which stems from the frustrations of a life lived in opposition to the will of God. Among the works of the flesh are enmity, strife, anger, party spirit.⁸ Anger within the individual is transformed in its character by Christian faith, and at the same time becomes a force transforming individual character and society as one resolves to root out structures of evil.

And so it goes. The force of faith—the commitment to Christian life—transforms the role of common experiences and throws them into a new focal perspective. Human sentimentality becomes Divine compassion; fear is no longer an emotion debasing human personality, but the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom; hope is no longer grounded in the vanities of human success but in the ultimate victory of God in establishing his kingdom; love is freed from its involvement in the immediacies of self-justification, to become the self-less love infused into life by the acceptance of God's reconciling love for men.

Toward Christian understanding

These illustrations of the illumination that Christian faith throws on a few of the areas of personal experience are indicative of the process of Christian understanding. Though the man brought under the sway of God's dominion knows the assurance that God is at work in him, to will and to work for his (God's) good pleasure, he is admonished also to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.⁹ The experience in worship, not of knowing God, but of being known by him, provides the point at which one responds in commitment. From this commitment-producing, Divine-human encounter one proceeds to work out to his fullest ability his understanding of what this means for every area of his life.

⁸ Gal. 5:19-21.

⁹ Philippians 2:12, 13.

The process of self-examination is at the core of the Christian life, as it is at the heart of worship. The Christian is called here to be an unhappy man for the ideal in his life is outside himself. He is called to be perfect, even as his heavenly Father is perfect. This sets up tensions, a constant sense of unworthiness, a remorse for guilt which doesn't vanish with the emotions of any momentary religious experience. This unhappiness, these tensions are not ultimate, for the Christian knows that his salvation does not depend on his attaining this perfection.

Finiteness is not the root of our sinfulness, for finiteness is our human condition as created beings. But finiteness is a ground for humility, for fear and trembling, lest in our endeavors to work out our salvation we be mistaken. The Christian's understanding needs the constant corrective of the dialectic established in fellowship, as he compares his interpretation of God's will with that of others. But fundamentally he must return to worship to fulfill his understanding. "Let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor."¹⁰ The test of work comes in the encounter with God in worship, an encounter in which one stands alone, except for Christ, before God.

Worship and Christian witness

The attempt to be transformed by the renewal of the mind is one which does not end with the boundaries of the individual life, for the individual is called to witness. The individual has no boundaries to his life, for every man is his brother. The Christian is "bound up with the world," bound up with it by the word "witness."

This very word, "witness," has both a passive and an active connotation. One is a witness in the sense that he has witnessed certain events. We might be tempted to think discipleship would be an easier matter for eyewitnesses, yet our very need, today, when Christianity carries the support of 1,900 years of history, the glory of the Church, the examples of the saints, and the support of a culture from the President of the United States on down, is to recapture the difficulty of discipleship for those contemporary with Jesus.

¹⁰ Galatians 6:4.

The drama of results leads people to espouse Christianity in virtue of the results, not in virtue of Jesus Christ. Put the results aside, imagine yourself a contemporary of the lowly carpenter's son, the man who had no regular employment, who associated with men of the tavern-crowd and women of ill repute, who was accused by men of respect and position of misleading the nation, and listen to the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye. . . ." You might respond, "How can this man give me rest?" Contemporaneity gives no advantage, and the Christian is one called to make himself Christ's contemporary in the ministry of servanthood.

The passive sense of the word "witness" applies in no sense to the Christian witness, anyhow, for the Christian, called in worship to be an eyewitness to what God has done in Christ, is called to be a participant. To confront Christ is to be faced with the necessity of deciding, of participating, for not to answer, to go silently by on the other side of the road, is to decide against him. The imperative of decision placed by Elijah before the Israelites in his trial with the devotees of the Baals, "If the Lord is God, follow him!", is the imperative that cries out to every age and every person in history.

Our participation in worship calls us then to be witnesses in an active sense, to give witness. The Gospels record a commission to the disciples just before Jesus' ascension, and also early in his ministry. The commission in each case involves the charge to go and preach, to proclaim or herald the good news. The word "evangelism" derives from the literal phrase "telling good news." Fundamentally, this means confronting people with the facts about who is God. This confrontation requires decision, decision requires, indeed is, a life of action, of faith. Faith is action on the assumption that Christ reconciles us to God, that he is the full revelation of God's will, that in his sign we will conquer.

Witness in the university

This type of action has relevance for the whole world, but as the call to be a Christian for the university student means making the university or college community the scene and milieu for his endeavor to discern the will of

God and act it out, let us concentrate our attention here, assuming that the principles laid down will only need reinterpretation for another context of life.

First, witness must not be out of context. The university community is a *particular* community, with problems, habits of life, activities, ways of speaking all its own. Kinsey reports that college people are even unique in their patterns of sexual behavior. The Christian witness must be made in this context. To witness to himself God took off the robes of majesty and became a very concrete person, and this concreteness must not be lost in the garb of pseudoreligiosity. The word "ghetto" has been used to describe the isolation of the Christian student group from the rest of the campus, and the ghetto walls are built from both the inside and the outside. Witness requires that these walls be broken down, that Christians, who differ from other men only in that they *know* they are sinners, cultivate with the wisdom of the serpent, and the wiles of the children of darkness, the ability to communicate the Christian gospel to the *whole* university community. The good news is to university people *within* the framework of the university community.

Second, witnessing must be made within the full framework of life. Just as the Christian must not allow himself to be categorized and pigeonholed, so he must not allow his witness to be categorized as "religion," and disposed of because labeled. In a qualitative analysis lab, when the unknown is labeled, the job is done. The Christian witness must be incisive enough to be clearly recognized, but our witness is not an argument, which can be classified as theology, but a Person, an Event, which cannot.

One illustration of making the Christian witness relevant, if politics can be defined as "struggle, contention, encounter and compromise among organized groups, interests, or individuals for the power to influence, organize, or operate the affairs of a community,"¹¹ then clearly the Christian student and the Christian student group ought not to think of Christian responsibilities in politics as exclusively out on the state and national scene, but rather

¹¹ *Minutes of the Meeting of the General Committee of the World's Student Christian Federation*, Nasrapur, India, Jan. 9-21, 1953 (W.S.C.F., 13 rue Calvin, Geneva, Switz.), p. 23.

acknowledge that "the primary political community for him is the university itself." This provides an arena for the redemption of the world which he shares, an arena for an imaginative and fruitful Christian witness. A parallel analysis of Christian involvement in economics, social dynamics, literary and artistic creative endeavor could be given.

Third, the Christian witness in the university community has intellectual responsibility unique to its context. This responsibility is manifold and far-flung. It involves the charge to become a lay-theologian, for the witnesser must be as competent in stating and defending his Christian faith as the defenders of its rivals are in defending theirs. He must see the relevance of the Christian faith to whatever area of the curriculum he is doing his major studies in. Beyond this, the Christian student group needs to become familiar with and help develop the growing concern for a Christian analysis of the true nature of the university. Unless he knows this material he cannot help the university fulfill its calling under God.

We have noted that worship cannot be maintained apart from witness and the vocation of the student. There are no hard and fast prescriptions or proscriptions which can be laid down. The main point is that witness within some such terms as these is part of the dynamic of the Christian faith, part of the charge of responsibility when in worship one learns what one must do to fulfill God's commission to him.

In the New Testament Christian community, among the followers of the way, a distinction was made which can be crudely stated in our words "teach" and "preach." One preached or proclaimed the Gospel to those outside the fellowship of the Church, and within the Church the work of teaching went on. Christians are exhorted to teach and admonish one another, but also to proclaim the Word to all nations. This distinction was possible because decision was required before entering the Church, the convert became committed in the conversion, and then in the fellowship was taught, and taught in turn, the meaning and understanding of the faith.

The one last word here is that this distinction is no longer relevant. Men have come into the Christian Church, into

the Methodist Student Movement, by virtue of habit, pleasant associations, social contacts, drive to be a leader, and for a thousand other reasons less than the call to commit themselves to Christ Jesus. Hence the student Christian movement, like the institutional church, needs all the more not to take pride in itself, and to presume that a proclamation of the Word of God to produce Christian commitment is most relevant within its own membership.

Chapter VII: APPRECIATIVE PRACTICE

The crows maintain that a single crow could destroy the heavens. Doubtless that is so, but it proves nothing against the heavens, for the heavens signify simply; The impossibility of crows.—Franz Kafka.¹

The witness of appreciation

What shall we do with the eternal realities as they exist in the human imagination? Franz Kafka, apparently beginning one of his aphorisms, trailed off, "A cage went in search of a bird. . . ." Cage the imagination we do, but it is not what we should do.

The imagination of the artist must be freed, not to create (for that is God's task) but to mirror the creator and his creation. The imagination is only and truly free when it is exercised in the job of dramatizing the meaning of existence. This is true in any of the arts.

The witness to God's transforming power is not to be curbed by the limitations of man's inventions. The caution of what has been is not solely its guide, although it must be taken into account. The witness must attempt to sound the depths and then communicate what has been revealed.

Then, if the artist is to communicate, he must have someone with whom the conversation takes place—whether it be verbal, in pitch and tone, in movement, in shapes and cubes or through the design of lines and colors. The one who witnesses makes his testimony; and it is not to a blank wall, it is to persons.

The will to worship and the attitude of appreciation are similar in their demands. One who has been confronted by a piece of sculpture which almost caused him to cease breathing has known the experience as quite akin to the moment of prayer with others of the community:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse

¹ Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China*, Schocken Books, 1946, p. 285.

This, of course, has long been recognized, and the place of worship has sought, though the art of its structure and appointments, so to stimulate the appreciations that the desire to worship would bend the will to the presence of God. The role of appreciation of art and the pose of worship are entwined, even as the purpose of worship and the part the artist plays in God's strategy for the transformation of our culture, are not to be separated.

Appreciation is as important as the composition itself.

The witness of appreciation is like response to an altar call. Just as the sinner makes acknowledgement of his conversion, so the spectator leaves off being spectator and is himself immersed in the work of the artist.

Studied appreciation

It must be pointed out over and over again that a member of the Christian student movement has a vocation from God to be a student. There is no being a student without study.

Parsons have long belabored the fatuous notion that one can be a Christian by osmosis—soaking up from the environment of home or church the essentials of the doctrines by which their faith lives. Such opinion is obviously false. It is just as untrue when applied to the arts.

Like religion, some have opined that all they would have to do to appreciate art is to take a good look. Certainly such opinion is basic to the current and flippant chuckle that is the reaction to any suggestion of modern art. It has also contributed to the opposite extreme, the careless attempt to cubbyhole art by assigning it to specialists. The latter prejudice at least has a semblance of honesty about it, an implication that appreciation requires prior attention.

Appreciation is analogous to conversation. Conversation is possible only when there are both listeners and talkers, and each participant must accept two roles. A monologist with an audience is not participating in a conversation. A conversationalist listens that he may speak. In fact, as has previously been pointed out, if he would really understand, he must go beyond listening and *hear*.

Hearing requires studied attention. So does the seeing which has depth beyond looking. Appreciation is based

upon the studied discipline of hearing and seeing. It goes far beyond feeling and moralizing. Appreciation drops the trite reaction, "I like that," and exclaims: "Now I see!"

Probe the myth

The Christian artist is used by his faith to sound the depths of significance. In the rhythm of the dance and accompaniment of music he witnesses to the real which is also mysterious and hidden from the common sight. In the arrangement of syllables and meanings his poetry moves into the core of being. In the drama of life his conversation and cues probe into that which God has revealed; in the novel his arrangement of life situations emphasize the predicament and the measure of man's relationships.

Those who are called upon to appreciate, instead of compose, must through the composition seek to know the mysteries beyond sight, also the significance of what is seen; to study the poetry, live the drama, and be willing to see in the novel the myth which is beyond the fiction.

The myth in art is its significance. The myth is its reality. The myth is its attempt to illuminate the faith which exploits it. The myth is its being. It must cast off the trivial and converse with the eternal realities.

For the student movement

This means that at whatever level the student movement operates, it must seek to illuminate the faith which motivates it.

It cannot escape art any more than it can dispense with worship. Both are integral to its mission of witness. It has an obligation to witness in the architecture of the buildings which house its activities.

There is no architectural style that is suited to the student movement, least of all the "modern" with its commercialized and theatrical effects. Paradoxically, it ought to be called modern because it is contemporary. It should try to reveal the meaning of (1) *dedication*, (2) *inspiration*, and (3) *aspiration* of the movement which carries the modifier of "Christian."

If committee members who are responsible for working on the design of a new student center fail to ask themselves in what manner the new structure will express the

dedication, the inspiration and the aspiration of the movement in relation to its faith, then they have failed in their responsibilities. When, however, the committee, the architect and the contractors have honestly studied and constructed with these paramount, then the members of the unit must so conduct themselves, that in fresh and helpful ways they may appreciate what they have. Each experience in the center should witness at some point to the dedication as Christian students, acknowledge their inspiration and be more confident in their aspiration.

Publications of a Christian student movement must not only take the arts seriously but in themselves be works of art. They should consciously seek a rapprochement between the theologian and the artist. They have an obligation to study how best to appreciate that which the artist has to give. The artistic quality of a publication will do more to witness to its inspiration than any number of printed protests or apologies. If a publication cannot be artistic, then it is probably not sincere enough to bother with.

The artistic in a publication goes far beyond an attempt to reproduce "great" works of art or even an occasional arty flourish. It must go into the very being of the publication, seeking at every point (type, layout, editorial perspective, as well as illustration) to have integrity as a witness to the meaning of God for men.

The dramatic

It may be that from the student movement will come the revival of drama that our culture is groping for. Worship in the corporate is essentially dramatic and it should be that drama be itself worshipful. If, self-consciously, dramatic groups that plead Christian allegiance try not only to produce drama that illustrates their dedication and fulfills their aspirations, but compose such drama, then we may be on the way to such a revival. There are some erratic and feeble signs of such possibilities; they should be encouraged with all the resources that the student movements can pour into them.

As has been reiterated, that which is apparently analogous between the arts and worship is too deep to leave up to analogy. The relationship is more close.

If the worship experience in fellowship is essentially dramatic in its forms, then the Christian student movements have been singularly remiss in their worship even granting a certain progress. They have lived pretty much on the high school sophomore level. They ought to grow up.

The chary and often self-conscious approach to the religious dance needs exploding. As Martha Graham has said, the posture of sincere dance is a "heaven-earth" relationship, and this relationship is felt by the dancer. Such awareness ought to be in the experience of the one who participates in the worship but may not be one of the dancers. It can come, however, from a studied appreciation of what is being attempted. The tension of the ego should be dissolved in the humble kneeling of the suppliant and the joyful exaltation of the committed.

The danger of the fad is ever present here—even more so than in architecture or sculpture—it costs less. Always, however, the reference must be not to the procession and the ritual in rhythm as such, but to the significance which the art illuminates. It must have meaning, and that meaning in terms of revelation. The dance is for the glory of God.

The other dramatic possibilities of worship in combination with liturgical art are boundless. There are no limits to the possibilities—only limits to the probable.

Our literature

As with most of the generalizations given in this brief study, the claim that our religious literature is puerile is open to contradiction. For, paradoxically, some of the most exciting of contemporary literary artists deal in profound fashion with the Christian myth: Auden, Mann, Eliot, C. S. Lewis, Paton, Berstl, Lagerkvist, Huxley, Asch. . . . The list could be extended to considerable length. But note, none of them are professional religionists, and some come from even a different tradition than that of the Christian community.

There is no doubt that the laymen are now better able to communicate than the professionals. Somehow the jargon of the theologians makes connection only with those initiated into its mysteries (wonderful fun, quite analogous

to the spirit of Eliot's commentators) and the preaching is often so convincingly mediocre as to convince only the already convinced. But C. S. Lewis makes converts through his writing.

The fate of being an editor of religious periodicals is to be persuaded that most "religious" writing has not been worth the effort.

There is no question, however, that one of the most interesting of contemporary movements is that of religion among the intellectuals, especially those who are the artists with words. They long ago sensed the rootlessness of our culture, left off a bemusement with scientism and its philosophical handmaidens, and while not always orthodox, do try to illuminate the mysteries of creation.

Again, the student movement is faced with the requirement of both composition and appreciation. There is a specious kind of spiritualism which creeps into many current "conversions," and the hucksters are busy reaping their profits from the revival of "faith." Making a parson the hero of a novel does not thereby, and automatically, make it worth while religiously. As always appreciation must be well guarded by discrimination. So much tripe has lately been written about the story of Mary Magdalene that to call it religious is an offense.

The members of the student movement must study the religious literature that is being produced. There is simply no excuse for the English classes outstripping the student center in this regard—but a Wesley Foundation as a center of study of significant literature? laughable at most universities!

As to the production of literature itself, great literature has often come from those groups that worked long and earnestly at their problem. Why should not the members of the Christian student movements self-consciously form such coteries?

Christ the transformer

All efforts at the transformation of our culture will fail if the effort is directed toward the transformation. There is an opening for the transformation, but, as Wesley insisted, Christ is the transformer, not ourselves. The con-

structive life in the arts will be as a response to God's reconciling love.

Therefore, every experience must be made subject to his judgment. The artist comes, with all the rest of us, to the Saviour in worship. Every relationship awaits his deliverance. Through his inspiration we will be kindled into a divine enthusiasm.

When that is so, the very walls of a student center will impress the visitor and invigorate the member with the transforming freedom of its witness. The walls will no longer be "decorated," but they will speak to all that they might know a transformation of culture is taking place, that the transformation is of Christ.

The act of conversion from self-centeredness to centering upon Christ will be positive. The biggest weakness of this tiny volume is readily apparent, certainly to the authors—it is largely negative. It should be, however, that as we confess our Saviour, the practice of our community will be that of transformation, not of hollow carping.

We must remember that our role is that of human beings and our insights into the faith are but fragmentary and tentative. It may be that it is God's purpose that we be used to help in the transformation of our culture, which, although it may never be accomplished, must be witnessed to.

The plea of this book is that such witness might know its focus through our worship, in our compositions, by our appreciations.